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LIVES

OF

THE ITALIAN POETS.

BY THE

REV. HENRY STEBBING,

M.A. M.R.S.L.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

TORQUATO TASSO 3

CHIABRERA 162

TASSONI 173

GIAMBATTISTA MARINI . . . 181

MARINI AND MURTOLA . . . 183

MARINI AND STIGLIANI . . . 185

ACHILLINI AND PRETI . . . 187

FULVIO TESTI 189

METASTASIO 193

APOSTOLO ZENO 239

FILICAIA 245

ALEXANDER GUIDI 248

FRUGONI 251

GIUSEPPE PARINI 257

VITTORIO ALFIERI 291

MELCHIOR CESAROTTI . . . 365

IPPOLITO PINDEMONTE . . 395

VINCENZO MONTI 413

UGO FOSCOLO 447

Torquato Tasso.

THERE is no name in the annals of literature which awakens perhaps so many deep emotions as that of Torquato Tasso. Those of Dante and Milton, men whose spirits were as mighty in moral dignity as their imaginations were sublime, may impress us with more awe and veneration—that of Ariosto, with the recollection of Garfagnana and the bandits, with a similar feeling of romance, and that of Byron with more melancholy to darken the splendid vision of his genius; but no one gives rise to so many of these feelings at the same moment as that of Tasso, whose high and noble mind would have carried him along the sublimest career of

action, but for the gentleness of his heart, and whose whole life would have been like a dream of romance, but that it was too long and darkly shadowed by affliction.

This celebrated man was born at Sorrento on the 11th of March 1544, and shortly after his father had taken his departure to join the army of the Emperor, in which his patron the Prince of Salerno had the command of the Italian infantry. Before his departure, he had left directions that should the infant with which Portia was pregnant prove a son, he was to be borne to the font by his most intimate friend, Don Ernando del Torres, a nobleman in every way worthy of his esteem, both from the excellence of his character and his elegant taste for literature. As soon as that gentleman received intelligence of the birth of a son to Bernardo, he hastened from Naples to Sorrento, and as sponsor bestowed upon the favoured infant the name he was destined to render so celebrated.

The childhood of Torquato, like that of many other eminent men, afforded several remarkable indications of future greatness. Some of the stories related of him, are evidently fictitious; but sufficient may be gathered from the numerous traditions that have been handed down from one age to an-

other, to prove the extraordinary precocity of his intellect. Among the other wonders told of him is, that by the time he was six months old, he not only began to use his tongue or babble as children are accustomed to do, but to form and pronounce words perfectly, and to express himself in a clear and intelligible manner. It is farther added, that there was nothing childish in his speaking except the fine and delicate tones of his voice; that he held the word on his tongue before he attempted to utter it, and formed what he intended to say before thinking of the sound of the words. Nor, if we are to believe the same tradition, did he manifest the usual dispositions of childhood—he is said never to have laughed while an infant, and very rarely to have wept. Such, and so wonderful, says Serassi, were the signs he gave at the very beginning of his life of that divinity of mind—of that lofty and inapproachable station which he was to occupy among men of genius.

His capacity for learning being thus early manifested, he began his studies when only three years old, and under the care and instruction of Giovanni d' Angeluzzo, a man of great knowledge and amiable disposition, imbibed the elements of that extensive erudition which gave so much force to his

genius. His father, Bernardo, had returned from Flanders in the month of December 1544, and in the following January, had the delight of seeing his little son, then ten months old, the very prodigy of Sorrento. Till 1547, he remained with his family in peace; but in that year his tranquillity was ruined by the fatal dispute between Sanseverino and the Viceroy of Naples, which ended in the banishment of both the Prince and his secretary. As this, however, did not take place till about three years after the commencement of the quarrel, the leisure of the intervening period was devoted to the Amadigi, and the direction of Torquato's infantile studies. Upon his resolving to follow the fate of the Prince, Bernardo, as we have seen, removed his family to Naples, that Portia might be near her mother and brothers during his absence, and that his son might obtain the instructions of accomplished masters. Their residence was in the palace of the Gambacorti, a quarter of which Bernardo furnished in the most elegant manner, and at an expense of twelve hundred ducats.

The grief which Portia suffered at the absence of her husband was only alleviated by the comfort she found in directing the pursuits of Torquato. Naples had lately seen the Jesuits establish them-

selves within its walls, and the reputation they possessed of being the best scholars and most laborious instructors in Europe, obtained for them the chief control over the education of the Neapolitan youth. Their first school was in a little church in the street del Gigante, and which they had erected for their own use. To this seminary Portia sent her Torquato soon after completing his sixth year,* and such was the ardour with which he attended to the lessons of the fathers, that he was never happy except when listening to their instructions. Before the day dawned he would leave his bed, and wait so anxiously for the hour of school, that his mother in the winter-time was obliged to send him with a servant and a lighted torch to show him along the neighbouring street.†

By the time he was ten years old, he had not only made himself master of Latin, but was far advanced in Greek, and composed orations and verses, which he recited to the satisfaction and surprise of all who heard them. His progress also in other kinds of knowledge was equally remarkable, and so well were his tutors satisfied with his thoughtful and devout disposition, that they admitted him to the communion when he was only nine years of age, and before he understood "that

* Serassi. † Manso.

in the host was the real body of Christ."* In the letter which records this circumstance, he says, that notwithstanding his ignorance of the mysterious union, he was "moved by a secret feeling of elevation, which the sanctity and reverence of the place, and the habits and the manner of the congregation, and the beating of the breast had contributed to awaken," and that having received the elements, or, according to the erroneous doctrine of his teachers, the real body of Christ, he felt within himself "he knew not what of new and unknown delight."

All the hopes which Bernardo had conceived of returning to his country being lost, he was anxious to discover some means of either rejoining his family or placing them in a situation where they would be less exposed to the avaricious designs of Portia's relatives. The expectation that Naples would be shortly besieged had some time before rendered him desirous of removing her from that city, and he hesitated between placing her in a convent or sending her to Sorrento. Naples, however, was not attacked, nor was there any appearance of a change in Sanseverino's fortunes; after enduring, therefore, a short time longer the distress he suffered, and pressed by Portia, who is

* Serassi.

said to have exclaimed in a passion of grief, that she would live with her husband even were it in hell, Bernardo made the ineffectual attempt to remove her which has been mentioned in his life. He only succeeded, however, as we have seen, in placing her in a convent; and Torquato being inadmissible there, he called him to Rome, that he might receive from his society some compensation for the loss of Portia's and of the youthful Cornelia's.

This was an important era in Torquato's life, and the grief he suffered at being separated from his mother, whom he so tenderly loved, may be regarded as the beginning of his sorrows. How strongly the remembrance of their parting was impressed on his mind may be gathered from the allusions he pathetically made to it on many subsequent occasions, and particularly in the exquisite canzone which he composed in a time of distress to be hereafter mentioned.

Me dal sen della madre empia fortuna
Pargoletto divelse; ah di que' baci,
Ch' ella bagno di lagrime dolenti,
Con sospir mi rimembra, e degli ardenti
Preghi, che se n' portar l' aure fugaci,
Ch' io non dovea giunger più volto a volto

Fra quelle braccia accolto
Con nodi così stretti e sì tenaci
Lasso ! e segui con mal sicure piante,
Qual Ascanio o Camilla, il padre errante.

Torquato arrived in Rome about the middle of October 1554, to the great joy of his father, who could hardly caress him sufficiently, and was not only comforted by his presence, but was relieved, by the pleasure it occasioned him, from a sickness with which he had been for some time oppressed. Shortly after Torquato's arrival, Jacopo, his uncle, sent his second son Cristoforo to be his companion in study and share the advantages of Bernardo's paternal instruction. The youth arrived at Rome in the latter part of November, and the two cousins pursued their studies together in the school of a distinguished master near the Palazzo di Monte Giordano, in which Bernardo had apartments. Cristoforo, it seems, required all the stimulus of emulation to make him a scholar, and it was only owing to the example of his companion that he subsequently became a respectable philosopher and theologian. "He is not inclined to study," says Bernardo in his letters, "but he has an acute mind, and at present loses no time; I think he will make greater advances in Greek than Latin,

having been better grounded in the rudiments of the former." He adds, "Torquato pays as much attention to him as if he were his brother, excites him to emulation, and has such an affection for him that I should find it difficult to separate them." In order that they might be instructed in a manner becoming their diligence, he paid a scudo per month additional that they might receive more lessons in Greek than were afforded by the ordinary rules of the school.

The death of Portia involved the unfortunate father and his son in new sorrows. Not only had Bernardo been deprived by her unnatural relations of his wife's society and fortune, but he now saw them pursuing measures to prevent his children from ever enjoying their right. In this state of distress he wrote by the hand of Torquato to Vittoria Colonna. It is supposed that the letter was wholly dictated by himself, but it is written in the first person, and seems to be the expression of Torquato's own feelings on the subject of his father's calamities; nor is there any thing in it which might not be said by a sensible and feeling youth of thirteen or fourteen. Speaking of the intention of his uncles to marry Cornelia without her father's consent, the writer says,

"To succour a poor gentleman fallen into misery and calamity without any fault of his own, and to preserve his honour, is the part of a noble mind, and if your Excellency afford him not this remedy, my poor father will die of despair. . . . . The sorrow occasioned by the loss of fortune is great, illustrious lady, but the grief felt for that of blood is greater still. This poor old man has but us two; fate has deprived him of his wealth, and of a wife whom he loved as his own soul; do not suffer his enemies to deprive him of his daughter also."

Neither his own efforts nor those of his friends proving of any avail, Bernardo consoled himself in the best manner he was able, and in the composition of his poems, which formed the only pleasure he could command, he found the taste of Torquato sufficiently acute to make him a useful critic. But the perusal of his father's writings had a far more important influence on the young scholar than that of quickening his judgment—it inflamed him with the desire of becoming a poet himself, and he had already, it appears, given proofs of his genius in two short poems which he had composed, the one on his leaving his mother, the other on her death.*

* Serassi.

But the expected invasion of the Roman State by the forces of Philip II. rendered it necessary that Bernardo should forego the longer enjoyment of his son's society, and he sent him in company with his cousin Cristoforo to Bergamo, for which place they set out September 5, 1556. The fame of Torquato's accomplishments had preceded him, and he was greeted by his relations with every demonstration of affection, being lodged in a palace belonging to the family situated in the Borgo Pignolo, and receiving visits from various friends who treated him in a manner which he never ceased to remember with gratitude. After remaining with them about seven months, he was called to Pesaro by his father, who had fled thither from Rome. His courteous manners and conversation immediately recommended him to the Duke, who made him the companion of his son, the young Prince Francesco Maria, then pursuing his studies under the learned Lodovico Corrado of Mantua. Profiting to the utmost by the lessons of this master in Greek, and at the same time receiving instructions from a distinguished mathematician, Federigo Comandino, who only taught a few of the young nobility in private, Torquato every day gave new proofs of his profound genius, and encouraged his

father to hope that he would make amends by his talents for the injuries of fortune.

The departure of Bernardo for Venice was followed by that of his son, who arrived there May 1, 1559. His company, it is said, was all his father required to complete the comfort he then enjoyed; and he lost no time in associating him in his favourite occupations, frequently employing him in copying and correcting parts of his manuscripts, but chiefly in the perusal of the best Italian works, both prose and verse. The wisdom of Bernardo in this respect is worthy of notice. It was his opinion that nothing could be more absurd than to employ the attention of youths in the study of the classics to the neglect of their own language, making them, he said, citizens abroad and strangers at home. In the study of Italian authors he made Torquato follow the same plan as is usually confined to the perusal of the ancients, teaching him to remark all the delicacies of which the language is capable, the peculiar beauties of the different writers, and by what means the most admired had arrived at the art of constructing such sweet and harmonious periods. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, formed the principal companions of Torquato at this period; but

as his father wished to make him eminent for general learning, and a man of business rather than a poet, he sent him in November 1560, to Padua, in the hope that he would there become a proficient in the civil law. Had he reflected more carefully on the subject, it is not unlikely that he would have seen how improbable it was that a youth, who had hitherto been almost solely employed in the study of the poets, and who had shown the most decided inclination to follow their example, would become a very assiduous student of a science so contrary in its nature both to his taste and previous pursuits.

Notwithstanding all his wishes to fulfil the intentions of his father, Torquato, like his predecessors of the same race, seems to have loved poetry the more by its being contrasted with the law. In ten months after the commencement of his legal studies at Padua, he had composed the poem of "Rinaldo;" and so high was the reputation he had obtained among his friends by previous compositions, both in prose and verse, that Girolamo Ruscelli, Atanagi, Danese Cataneo, Cesare Pavesi, and other distinguished men of letters, particularly the two last mentioned, urged him to undertake a longer work. Knowing that it would

give his father no pleasure to find him employed in a design which must necessarily divert his mind from his more important studies, he kept the affair an entire secret as long as he was able, but he had the satisfaction of learning, when it came to Bernardo's ears, that he should be left to pursue his poem undisturbed, and, in fact, be allowed to change his present studies for the more agreeable ones of philosophy.

Permission to publish the poem was the next act of Bernardo's indulgence, and in April 1562 it was ushered into the world under the auspices of the Cardinal d'Este, to whom it was dedicated.* The success of this work fully equalled the most ardent hopes of its author. He was then but eighteen, and Italy saw with astonishment the production of so young a man attracting the admiration of all classes, men of letters and the people uniting in its praise, and regarding it as a certain sign of that universal fame to which its author would hereafter attain. There were not wanting those who considered it as equal to the best poems that had been written in Italian, and in some parts superior ;† one author, Paolo Beni, affirming that he had sung the loves of Rinaldo so

* Manso. † Serassi.

well while a youth, that he was second to no epic poet, except himself. I mention these opinions not because they are worthy of attention as criticisms, but to indicate the reputation which Torquato thus early possessed, and which must have added considerably to his enthusiasm for poetry. It has been rightly observed that the Rinaldo, though a remarkable production for so young an author, by no means merits such extravagant praise; that it was contrary to the judgment of both Torquato and his father, the former scarcely deigning to reckon it among his works; and that the correctest estimate which can be given of its merit is that expressed by Menagio, who, in his preface to the Aminta, remarks that the Rinaldo was the work of a youth, but of a youthful Torquato Tasso, in the same manner as it was said by Longinus that the Odyssey was the production of an old man, but of an old Homer.

But it is not to be supposed because our young poet was pursuing his favourite art with so much ardour, that he neglected in the mean time the general cultivation of his mind. Literature, in the age when he lived, was regarded with the highest reverence by those who wrote as well as by those who read; authors were considered as

a superior class of men, as deserving to be the companions of princes, and as exercising a power higher and nobler than that by which princes rule: but they won this high esteem by the value they themselves placed on their calling; they were willing to renounce every good for the fame which would attend the successful cultivation of their abilities, and thus all those whose names have come down to us with glory, were men of deep and earnest study, passing their youth in the acquisition of every species of learning, and their manhood in meditating on their knowledge. Tasso, while at Padua, and while occupied in the composition of a chivalrous and romantic poem, attended the lectures of professors on the profoundest branches of education. In the private apartments of the learned and celebrated Sperone, as well as in the public school of the not less erudite Carlo Sigonio, he studied Aristotle and the critics; while under the direction of Federico Pendasio and Francesco Piccolomini he fathomed with equal attention the moral and metaphysical systems of Socrates and Plato, laying the foundation for that profound philosophy which gave birth to his "Dialogues;" which, according to the testimony of the most learned of his countrymen, approached nearer

than any, that had been written in that philosophical age, to the discourses of Plato.

The circumstances of Bernardo about this time were, as has been said, better than they had ever been since the first shock of his fortunes; but he was still not in a state to support the increasing expenses of Torquato's maintenance and education. In order, therefore, to meet them in the best manner possible, he determined on accepting the invitation of the Cardinal d'Este for himself, and of Annibale di Capua for his son, who was placed with that nobleman as a companion in his studies.* To Bernardo's temporary connection with the house of Este was owing the dedication of the Rinaldo to the Cardinal; but it is asserted by the oldest of Torquato's biographers, that this circumstance occurred in opposition to his father's wishes, who would have had it inscribed to the Duke of Mantua.† The error, however, of this statement is evident, as Bernardo was not in the employ of the latter Prince till after the publication of the poem.

The residence of the elder Tasso with the Cardinal lasted only for a few months; and nearly at the same time Torquato removed to the University of Bologna, then newly re-established by the

* Serassi. † Manso

judicious and liberal patronage of Pope Pius IV. and Pier Donato Cesi, Bishop of Narni, lately appointed Principal of that venerable seat of learning. Besides inviting the most learned professors from all parts of Italy to occupy the chairs of the University, the Bishop of Narni also sought for young men of promising talent to form the first classes in his new schools. The reputation of Torquato attracted the earliest notice of the good prelate, and he was accordingly invited to take up his residence at Bologna. It was not merely the flattering compliment conveyed by the invitation that made it particularly agreeable to the young poet, the men from whom he had received the greatest instruction while at Padua, were also about to proceed to the University of Bologna; and, in addition to the valuable lectures of these distinguished masters, he knew that he should also enjoy the lessons of others equally celebrated, and find in the literary circles of the place the most advantageous opportunities of exercising his talents. His expectations were fully realized. Donato Cesi held regular conversazioni in his own palace, to which all persons were invited who had any ability or learning. In one of these meetings Torquato distinguished himself by defending the su-

periority of a sonnet written by a favourite author of his, to that of another, which one of the company asserted to be the finest in the Tuscan language. Besides the assemblies held in the palace of the Bishop, there were others of a more private nature; and, in the house of Franco Spinola, a new academy was instituted for the discussion of learned questions, as in that of the Platonists. The effect of this literary society on the mind of Torquato was in many respects beneficial. It brought especially all his knowledge into use before it had time, as is the case with many students, to lose the life it possesses when first placed in the mind; for knowledge, if its effects on different persons be regarded, may be really said to have the nature of seeds, which, if sown in cultivated ground and gathered in their increase, will in time multiply a hundredfold, but, if left in a cold and unploughed soil, will be of no use but to cumber it.

The materials of some of his best discourses, especially those on heroic poetry, are said to have been collected during the early part of his residence at Bologna, and to the same period is to be ascribed the more serious adoption of a resolution which had entered his mind while at Padua, to write an epic poem on the conquest of Jerusalem

by Godfrey of Boulogne. His friend Danese Cataneo, who had so great a share in bringing the Rinaldo to light, encouraged him, on the first idea of the subject, to put it into execution, and assisted him in finding names for the principal personages, in arranging the episodes, and making other preparations for the work. His acquaintance at Bologna with the Cavalier Bolognetti, the author of an heroic poem entitled Il Costante, served still farther to excite him to the undertaking, and he commenced the work by drawing out a regular plan of the first three cantos, the original of which is still preserved in the library of the Vatican, and was printed at Venice in 1722. As this specimen of the poem was dedicated to the Duke of Urbino, and, as he was Tasso's patron while at Bologna, Serassi conjectures that it was written in or about the year 1563, that is, when the author was only nineteen. The noblest talent, it is said, is evident throughout this sketch, of which, however, he retained but a very small portion when, in subsequent years, he pursued the magnificent design; and we hence learn how perseveringly genius will follow the track it has marked out for itself, while it may see reasons for frequently retracing its steps.

But the studies of Torquato met with a sudden

interruption, and from a circumstance which, considering his amiable disposition and general character, was little to be expected. Shortly before the time of which we are speaking, the learned University of Bologna had been considerably annoyed by a series of bitter pasquinades, which ridiculed not only the professors but the scholars, and even the gentlemen of the town. Every one felt enraged at the sarcasms which the unknown writer of these satires so plentifully showered around, but no one thought of making any great exertion to discover the offender. It happened, however, one day, that Torquato, standing in the midst of some persons belonging to the University, recited one of the latest pasquinades, and some lines which were not generally known: he did this with the more ease and gaiety, as he chanced to have as great a share in the ridicule of the poem as any one in Bologna. But this did not save him from the sudden suspicion that he was the author of all the squibs which had appeared. When it was recollected, moreover, how great a command he possessed of versification, and what were his general talents, the idea became still stronger, and his accusers regarded the matter in so serious a light, that they hastened to the magistrate to obtain the

infliction of summary punishment on the supposed offender. An officer was accordingly sent to his chambers to apprehend him; but, as he happened to be out at the time, they took all his papers and laid them before the magistrate, Marcantonio Arresio. Torquato, immediately on finding what had taken place, accompanied some of his accusers to the tribunal, while others were busily employed in sealing his chambers, as if he had been guilty of high treason. The examination produced no proofs whatever of his having written the obnoxious satires, and he was set at large; but it may be easily imagined how deep an impression the occurrence produced on his high and delicate mind. Bologna was no longer to him the place it had been, and, to render his present situation the more uneasy, he was deprived of the assistance he had been accustomed to receive from the Bishop of Narni, that prelate having resigned the office of Principal of the University, for that of Vice-legate to Cardinal Borromeo.

In February 1564, Torquato bade adieu to Bologna, with the intention of joining his father at the Court of the Duke of Mantua; but, finding on his arrival at Modena, that Bernardo was gone to Rome, he took up his abode with one of his relations, at Castelvetro, from whence he wrote to

Donato Cesi, explaining at full his reasons for leaving Bologna, and setting forth in the strongest light the unjust and disgraceful conduct of his enemies. After staying a short time at this place, he proceeded to Rangona, where he was entertained with great hospitality by the Princess of that State, Signora Claudia, and then hastened to Padua, on the invitation of his friend Scipione Gonzaga, who had established a society at his house, under the name of the Academia degli Eterei. The members of this Academy, most of them young men of noble families, and all distinguished by their fondness for literature, received Torquato with the most marked affection, and he was soon sufficiently recovered from the shock his spirits had lately received, to apply himself with his usual ardour to poetry and philosophy. He also at the same time took the name of Il Pentito, or The Penitent, to express, according to some, his regret at having lost his time in the useless study of the civil law, but more probably, according to the opinion of others, to indicate his general sorrow at not having profited to the best of his abilities, or rather at having left Padua for Bologna, where he had suffered such uncourteous treatment.*

* Serassi.

He now reverted to the idea of his epic poem, of which he had drawn out the plan at the latter University. His studies in philosophy and criticism were all directed to this great purpose, and he collected from the works of the most celebrated writers whatever might assist him in the accomplishment of his grand design. His ideas on the subject were as yet undetermined—his taste had been formed on the best models of classic composition, but his imagination was captivated by the romance writers of his own and other countries. To fix, therefore, his thoughts on the subject which required such serious consideration, he wrote his celebrated "Discourses on Poetry," in which he examines the various theories of the critics, and the methods best calculated to insure the proper objects of the art. The treatise on epic poetry was written expressly with a view to the "Gerusalemme," and both that and the others were addressed to Scipione Gonzaga, as a testimony of the author's respect and gratitude.

At the end of the term, Torquato hastened to his father at Mantua, and the delight which Bernardo, now more than seventy years old, felt at this meeting, could only be equalled by that of his affectionate son. The fame which the latter had

acquired by his Discourses on Poetry, and his specimen of the intended epic, inspired his parent with those feelings of joyous hope which he had experienced when commencing his own career; and the sentiments he expressed on the subject of his growing reputation, made a deep and lasting impression on Torquato's heart. "He said to me," observes our poet, "that his love for me had made him forget that which he had for his poem—that no glory in the world, no perpetuity of fame, could ever be so dear to him as my life, and nothing more delightful to him than my reputation."

In the middle of November, Torquato returned to Padua, and soon after became acquainted there with Battista Guarino, whose similarity of taste and pursuits rendered him, for a considerable period, his most intimate associate. He had the satisfaction also of receiving, about the same time, a letter, in which he found himself appointed one of the gentlemen of the Cardinal d'Este, and invited to attend the court of that Prince before December. This appointment was owing to the exertions lately made by Bernardo, who feared, from the bad success which attended his affairs at the court of Spain, that his son would be left in a state of destitution unless he obtained him some powerful

protector before his death. Sperone, however, on hearing of the circumstance, used his endeavours to persuade Torquato from accepting the appointment, representing in the strongest colours the vices of courts, the constant troubles to which envy of his superior talents would expose him, and enforcing his reasons by the instance of his own bad success at Rome. It would have been happy for our poet had he taken this advice, and learnt to live contented with the pittance which the unpatronized exertion of his talents might have earned: but his philosophy had not yet gained sufficient strength to make him see how much nobler this would have been than to live constantly exposed to the caprices of a master, though in a style befitting the nobleness of his birth.

But, at the appointed time, he set out for Ferrara, taking an affectionate farewell of his friends at Padua, and proceeded direct to Mantua, where he was to be provided with the necessary paraphernalia of a courtier. Unfortunately, the pleasure of his short stay was destroyed by a severe and dangerous sickness, and it was only after much careful attention from his father and a skilful physician, that he was enabled to continue his journey.

Torquato reached Ferrara the last day of Octo-

ber, and in the midst of the preparations for the arrival of the Archduchess Barbara of Austria, whose nuptials were shortly to take place with the Duke Alfonso, brother of the Cardinal. The splendour of the scene which presented itself to the eyes of the poet, was well fitted to make a strong impression on his imagination. The Court of Ferrara in the time of Alfonso II. is said to have been the most magnificent in Italy, and on the occasion of which we are speaking, the flower of European chivalry, and the gayest pomps of its most romantic age, were engaged to grace the festival.

It is supposed that Torquato did not accompany his patron to Trent when he went to meet the Archduchess, but was suffered to remain behind in order to continue his studies, which the Cardinal expressed himself desirous of not interrupting any more than could be avoided. The rejoicings which attended the entry of the Princess were equal to the preparations which had been made, and tournaments and spectacles of every description served to fill the town with wonder, till they were suddenly stopped by the death of the Pope, which occurred a few days after their commencement.

Tasso, it appears, accompanied the Cardinal to Rome, when he went to attend the election of a

new Pontiff, and it was on his return from this journey that he first began to attract the notice of the Princess Lucretia, and her celebrated sister Leonora, whose influence over the fate of the poet was so remarkable. The ages of these ladies have been particularly noted by Tasso's biographers—that of the former was thirty-one, and that of Leonora thirty; but the elegance of their persons, their accomplishments and amiable disposition, had preserved the gracefulness of youth undiminished. The mother of these amiable women was Renata, daughter of Louis XII. King of France, a Princess who with the highest qualities of mind and disposition had, in the eyes of her bigoted husband and citizens, one fault which more than counterbalanced all the virtues she was acknowledged to possess. Calvin, at the time of which we are speaking, was in the plenitude of his reputation, and the learning and powerful eloquence which he employed in his work obtained many converts to his opinions wherever he preached. In the course of his travels, he passed through Ferrara, and the Duchess, desirous of becoming acquainted with his doctrines, attended his preaching, and finally imbibed his opinions. For some time, the Prince was ignorant of the circumstance, and had no sus-

picion of his wife's inclination to Protestantism, but he at length discovered the errors of which she was supposed to be guilty, and not deigning to hear either excuse or defence, immediately drove her from him, and confined her to a castle in France, where her only pleasure was that which she derived from the education of her daughters.

Thus brought up under the immediate care of their mother—one of the most accomplished women of the age, Leonora and her sister were imbued at a very early period with a love of literature and the elegant arts, and when they returned to Court, became the distinguished patrons of all who were celebrated for their genius or erudition. The Rinaldo had already made Tasso an object of attention, and his amiable manners and conversation speedily rendered him a particular favourite with the Princesses. The impression which the first interview with Leonora left on his mind, was, it is thought, the foundation of his romantic and ill-fated passion:

> E certo il primo dì, che 'l bel sereno
> Della tua fronte agli occhi miei s' offerse,
> E vidi armato spaziarvi Amore,
> Se non che riverenza allor converse
> E meraviglia in fredda selce il seno,
> Ivi perìa con doppia morte il core.

When first I saw thy face, serenely fair,
And powerful Love, all arm'd, lie ambush'd there,
A double death my trembling heart had known,
Had fear and awe not turn'd it first to stone.

But besides the gratification which Tasso found in the approbation of the Princesses, and which so soon proved fatally dangerous to his peace, he enjoyed, through their influence with their brother, the particular regard not only of the Cardinal but of the Duke Alfonso, who showed him great favour, and introduced him to the principal personages about his Court. The situation, in which he thus found himself placed, was well calculated to inspire a young poet with brilliant hopes, and make him blend with the more sublime and pure creations of his genius the gay and sparkling images of courtly halls. It was even still more adapted to make him forget the calm majestic figure of Philosophy as she had revealed herself to him in the retreats of his youth, and to dazzle him with forms which merited neither his admiration nor respect. But the influence of these circumstances on his mind induced him to recommence his intended epic, which he now determined to write on such a plan that it should include a particular eulogium on the family of Este. The work had been untouched for

more than a year, but his present anxiety to please his patron, to win new smiles from the lovely Leonora and her sister, and establish his renown as a poet, gave him so much energy on resuming his labours, that in a few months he had completed six entire cantos, besides several minor pieces written to gratify the Princesses.

In the spring of 1566, he took advantage of his patron's journey to Rome, to visit Padua and Mantua. From the former place he wrote to Ercole Tasso, informing him how he spent his time there, and that the Academici Eterei being about to publish their productions, had requested him to allow his contributions to appear in the forthcoming volume, to which he consented, giving them thirty-eight sonnets, two madrigals, and two canzoni. He also mentions in the same letter, that he was employed about some dialogues and orations, which he describes as not being in a style so familiar as his epistles, nor so Boccaccio-like as would have pleased many.

His return to Ferrara was welcomed by the principal personages of the Court with many demonstrations of regard, and he was honoured with a mark of respect usually shown only to courtiers of high rank and pretensions. There appears to have

been three orders of persons among those who surrounded the Prince, each of which had a peculiar allowance and reception. The poorest dined in the common hall; those next in rank in their chambers; while the rest, who enjoyed the particular esteem of their patron, or had a right to the distinction from either age or rank, were admitted to the table of the Cardinal or Duke himself.* Tasso had so gained the affections of the former, that he was now received as a guest who merited the honour above-mentioned; and in addition to the gratification he received from this circumstance, he had the pleasure of acquiring the attention of Il Manzuoli and other men of talent in Ferrara, among whom were Montecatino and Giambatista Pigna, the biographer of Ariosto.

But a circumstance occurred about this time, which gave a slight variation to the uniform character of the poet's present mode of life. Among the ladies of the Court, Signora Lucretia Bendidio attracted his admiration above any other, and the beauty of her person, and her singularly sweet and harmonious voice seem to have inspired him with an incipient feeling of love. It has been made a matter of debate whether Tasso had any real

* Serassi. Note, p. 136.

passion for this lady or not, but it is useless to argue when conjectures must throughout supply the place of facts; and as little can be gathered from the expressions of Tasso's poetry on the one side, and equally little from the few circumstances we know of the affair on the other, the question must be left undecided. It is, however, one of those passages of his life which we should gladly have seen cleared up, as it would have thrown great light on the subject of his passion for Leonora, and enabled us in some measure to discover whether his love for that Princess was the genuine offspring of his heart, or had its origin in youthful ambition, though subsequently fed and nourished up into a true and vivid passion by his natural warmth of feeling and poetical imagination.

But whatever might be the state of his mind in this respect, he did not find it expedient to prosecute his suit. Pigna, who was also in love with the fair Lucretia, was the secretary and favourite of the Duke, and possessed sufficient influence at Court to be in every respect, a formidable rival to a young aspirant after patronage. The Princess Leonora, who was undoubtedly the sincere friend of Tasso, saw all the danger to which he would expose himself if he ventured upon a

contest with the Secretary, and therefore prudently advised him to convert the praises of his mistress into a vehicle for complimenting Pigna himself. Torquato consented, and instead of writing verses to Lucretia, composed a commentary on three canzoni of his rival's, whom he lauded as a poet equal to Petrarch, and as deserving the most unqualified admiration for the fulness of mind and elegance of language which his verses exhibited. The commentary was dedicated to the Princess, and certainly, we have not a more curious document than the address with which it was accompanied. It abounds in the most extravagant compliments to the lady whom he professed to love; but these are fully equalled by those he confers on his rival, and we thus see a youthful lover and poet voluntarily sacrificing his passion to the fear of offending an old and influential courtier. There may, however, be two reasons suggested to explain this strange conduct of Tasso. Either his love might be a simple admiration of Lucretia's beauty, without being blended with any deeper sentiment; or his passion for the Princess Leonora might be already gaining possession of his heart, and making feelings of every other kind subservient to it, except as he indulged them, perhaps, to save himself from the danger of a

passion so perilous in its nature. Nor is it at all improbable that the latter was the case. It is much more reasonable, and more conformable to our reverence for his character, to suppose that the Princess was the first and only real object of his affection, and that he strove to inspire himself with the love of Lucretia as a protection against this passion, than to believe that he first loved the lady Bendidio, and being disappointed in his suit, freed himself to the fascinations of the Princess, and was thus unwittingly made the victim of an ardent and unfortunate love.

Neither the secretary Pigna nor Tasso obtained the hand of Lucretia, who became the wife of one of the Machiavelli; but the poet, even after he had resigned all outward claims to her attention, continued, it is said, to seek her approbation, and with this intent offered to defend publicly fifty axioms on love (Conclusioni Amorose), which he did with great applause in the academy of Ferrara and before the whole assembled Court. Among his opponents was the celebrated Signora Orsina Bertolaia Cavaletta, a lady who possessed a remarkable acquaintance with scholastic and Platonic philosophy, and who, on the present occasion, proved the most skilful disputant with whom our poet

had to contend, pressing him very closely on the twenty-first proposition, which stated, "that man naturally loves more intensely and constantly than woman."

But the attention of Torquato was suddenly called off from these occupations by a message which informed him that his father was lying dangerously ill at Ostia on the Po, of which place he was governor. He set off without delay, and arrived only in time to comfort the last hours of his venerable parent. The exertions he had made to put the house and affairs of Bernardo in some degree of order, and the grief he suffered at his death, threw him into an illness, and he returned to Ferrara deeply affected both in mind and body. The festivals, however, which occurred shortly after on the occasion of the Princess Lucretia's marriage with the Duke of Urbino, and the occupation he found in composing a canzone in honour of the event, contributed to the recovery of his spirits, and he returned to his poem and other literary pursuits with his accustomed vigour. But these occupations and his attention to the Princess Leonora, now deprived of the society of her sister, were interrupted by a summons from the Cardinal to accompany him to France, whither he was

called by the situation of his diocese, exposed at that time to the rapid increase of the Hugonots. He set out on this journey towards the end of 1570, but before his departure had the precaution to make arrangements for the safe disposal of his literary property, and with the natural anxiety of a man whose reputation was the chief object of his thoughts, left directions in a written document for the publication of his poems in case of his death. "Since life is frail," says this testament, "if it should please God to take me while on my journey to France, I pray Signor Ercole Rondinelli to take charge of my property; and first, in regard to my compositions, I would have him collect my Amatory Sonnets and Madrigals, and give them to the world; for the rest, whether amatory or otherwise, which I have written in the service of my friends, I desire that they may remain buried with myself, except that only which begins

Or che l' aura mia dolce altrove spira.

The oration which I made at Ferrara at the opening of the Academy, I should be glad to have published, and also the four books on Heroic poetry; the last six cantos of Godfrey, and of the first two such stanzas as may seem least faulty, if they be all pre-

viously corrected by Signor Scipione Gonzaga, Signor Domenico Veniero, and Signor Batista Guarini, who, from the friendship and connexion I have with them, will not, I am persuaded, refuse to take this trouble. Let them know, moreover, that I would have them cut out and repress without saving any thing which may appear indifferent or superfluous. But in making additions or alterations let them be more particular, as the poem cannot be otherwise than imperfect. If any of my other compositions should be considered worthy of publication by Signor Rondinelli and the rest, they are at liberty to dispose of them as they please. As for my robes, which are in pledge to Abram —— for twenty-five lire, and seven pieces of tapestry which are in pledge for thirteen scudi to Signor Ascanio, and those which are in this house, I desire that they may be sold, and the money which they fetch applied to placing the subjoined epitaph on my father, whose body is buried in St. Paul's. And if any impediment should occur in effecting these objects, let Signor Ercole apply for the assistance of the most excellent Madame Leonora, who, I trust, on my account will be liberal to him." The date which appears on the original copy of this document is 1573, and Tasso's jour-

ney has been said to have taken place in 1572,* but the date of the testament is supposed by Serassi to have been added by some other person, as the journey certainly occurred in 1570.†

Tasso met with the most honourable treatment from the French monarch, Charles IX., who delighted in the society of literary men, and was in some degree a patron of learning. In his conversations with our author he discovered that fame had not spoken too highly of his genius and acquirements, and the admiration he felt for him as a poet and the bard of Christian chivalry, was greatly increased by finding him versed in all the branches of philosophy. His esteem was manifested on several occasions, and he is said to have offered some valuable presents which Tasso refused to accept; while, on the other hand, it is affirmed by Balzac, in his "Entretiens," that he was so reduced while at Paris, that he was obliged to ask charity of a lady of his acquaintance. Serassi treats this tale with contempt, and asks whether it is probable that at the court of a Cardinal, so rich and so splendid as the Cardinal of Este, any one

* Manso.

† Mr. Hobhouse, who saw the will, says that the last figure is illegible.

could stand in need of support? But the good Abbot must have forgotten that Tasso's robes were in pledge, and for only twenty-five lire before he left home; that he was quite as likely to stand in need of money in Paris as at Ferrara, and that it is not a self-evident truth that a patron's generosity is increased by a journey. But whether it be true or not that he rejected the pecuniary offers of Charles, he employed his influence with so much success on one occasion, that no doubt remains respecting the flattering manner in which he was treated by the monarch. An unfortunate poet who had committed some grievous offence against the King was condemned to die, and notwithstanding considerable influence had been exerted to save him, Charles continued inflexible, and the execution was ordered to take place without delay. Tasso approached the King, and said, with an expressive look, "I beg, Sire, that you will order the speedy death of this criminal, who by his wicked conduct has made human frailty seem more powerful than the teachings of philosophy." Charles understood the allusion, and immediately pardoned the prisoner. About the same time also he had the gratification of being admitted to the friendship of the celebrated Ronsard, who was then on the eve of publishing a collection of his poems. The genius

of this writer was highly venerated by Tasso, and he read his works with the greatest delight and enthusiasm. Of the manner in which he spent his time in France, and the opinion he had formed of the people and the country, he gave a particular account in a long and elegant letter to the Count Ercole de' Contrari, of Ferrara.

But Tasso's life was that of a courtier, and he was consequently subject to the usual vicissitudes produced by the envy of rivals and the caprice of patrons. Amid all the demonstrations of respect he was daily receiving from the King of France, he could perceive a degree of coldness in the conduct of the Cardinal towards him which could only be accounted for by the machinations of those who were jealous of his fame and influence. His sensitive mind shrank from the idea of being not only a dependant but a disliked and neglected dependant, and he accordingly asked permission of his master to return to Italy. The petition was granted, but in a manner which showed that the Cardinal was not willing to part with him under any appearance of unfriendliness. In company, therefore, with his patron's Secretary, for whose departure he was persuaded to remain till December 1571, our poet bade adieu to France, and, most probably, as poor as he had entered it. He

proceeded to Rome, which he reached in January, and was received by the Cardinal Ippolito with many marks of esteem, inspired both by the recollection of Bernardo, for whom he had so long entertained a warm attachment, and by admiration of the talents now exhibited in his son. To add to the pleasure which Tasso derived from this attention, he was lodged in the same palace, that known by the name of the Palazzo a Monte Giordano, in which he had spent with his father a happy period of his youth. But he remained at Rome only a few months. He had the fortune to make a successful application to the Duke of Ferrara to be admitted into his service, and in April he set out on his return to the scenes amid which he had commenced his life as a courtier. The conditions upon which he entered the service of the Duke are said to have been very advantageous, and he was exempted from all claims upon his attention which might interfere with his studies, or the composition of his poem. His gratitude to the Duke Alfonso for this liberality was expressed not only at the beginning of his poem, but with equal fervour in his discourse addressed to Scipione Gonzaga, in which he says, speaking of his patron, "he drew me from the darkness of my base fortune to the

light and reputation of the Court — he relieved me from distress and placed me in a comfortable condition — he gave value to my writings by hearing them often and willingly, and by honouring me who produced them with every kind of favour — he deemed me worthy of the honour of his table and of his intimate conversation, nor was I ever denied by him any favour that I asked."

It was now that Tasso felt himself in a condition to pursue his Gerusalemme with that steadiness of attention which it required. He had been correcting and augmenting with great diligence during his stay in France the portion already written, but the capricious conduct of the Cardinal and his necessities prevented him from continuing his labours, and Ferrara and Alfonso were destined to enjoy the honour of seeing the poet construct the noblest monument of his genius. At the commencement of his undertaking he drew out, as we have seen, a plan of the fable, and, as it would appear, so fully and particularly, that he had now rather to versify and ornament than to invent. But the care with which he composed was equal to the vigour of his imagination. He is said to have been continually changing various passages of the different books, paying particular attention to the episodes, to their

novelty, beauty, and proper situation, that they might have a necessary dependance on the principal action, and tend to make the whole poem more complete and striking.

The first new interruption to his progress was a serious illness; the second, the death of the Duchess Barbara, which rendered it necessary for him to devote his attention to the condolence of the Duke, who was deeply affected at the loss of his amiable consort. In an oration, and some elegiac verses which he wrote on the occasion, he set forth the virtues of the Princess in the most glowing colours, and few compositions of the kind equal these of Tasso, either for eloquence of language, or warmth of feeling. The death of the Princess Barbara was followed by that of the Cardinal Ippolito, the uncle of Alfonso, and Tasso again took the opportunity of expressing his gratitude to the illustrious family. Nor was he left unrewarded for these indications of affection. The professorship of geometry shortly after becoming vacant in the University of Ferrara, the Duke gave him the appointment, and as it required little time or attention, it was gratefully accepted by the poet, notwithstanding the smallness of the stipend.

His appointment to this office took place in Ja-

nuary 1573, and in the same month Alfonso leaving Ferrara for a sojourn of some weeks at Rome, he reverted to the design he had formed some time before of composing a pastoral drama, on the same plan as the Sfortunato of Agostino degli Arienti, which he had seen represented with great applause before the Court, about six years since. On the return of the Duke in March, the "Aminta," so full of the highest beauties of which pastoral poetry is susceptible, was ready for representation, and on the 23rd of the month it was performed before the Duke, the Cardinal his brother, and their courtiers, all of whom expressed their delight at its rare merits; even Pigna and others who might have envied the poet's fame, being bribed to applaud it by the compliments he paid them in different parts of the piece. The learned Sperone Speroni, however, who was represented in the character of Mopso, and who had offended Tasso by some hypercritical remarks on his Gerusalemme, was excepted from this complacent treatment, and it is conjectured that this was one reason why the author, who subsequently regretted his satire on Speroni, did not publish the poem, which, in fact, did not appear till printed without his consent by the younger Aldo at Venice in 1581.

The Aminta had not ceased to be the theme of conversation at Ferrara, when the Duchess of Urbino, who was not present at the representation, invited Tasso to Pesaro, that she might hear him read his celebrated production. Alfonso immediately granted him the desired permission to undertake the journey, and he passed some months with the Princess and her husband at Pesaro and Castel Durante, delighting the former so much by the repetition of his poems and the composition of several in her praise, that she could scarcely bear to hear of his departure, while the glowing character of the poet's language in her praise has led to the belief that he was at this time more in love with Lucretia than Leonora.*

It is supposed that she accompanied him on his return to Ferrara to take leave of her brother the Cardinal, who was about to set out on a second journey to France; but however this may be, before bidding Tasso farewell, she presented him with a magnificent ruby, which served him at a future period of his life as usefully as the magic rings which ladies of old gave to their adventurous knights.

As soon as he was left at liberty to pursue his

* Serassi.

regular occupations, he formed the resolution of concluding his epic before the termination of the year; but in the mean time could not resist his inclination to write a tragedy, a species of poetry to which his admiration of the ancient drama had given him great partiality. He had hardly, however, ended the first act, when Alfonso so strongly insisted on the completion of the Gerusalemme, that he was obliged to discontinue it, and turn from an endeavour to rival the Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles to a work far more likely to obtain him immortality than any such attempt. But while intent on fulfilling the wishes of his patron, he was interrupted by the festivities which took place at Ferrara in honour of Henry III. of France, who, on his accession to the throne, passed through that city on his way to Paris. He was also again hindered by a quartan ague, that prevented him from working for several months, and which was the more irritating as it assailed him just after he had commenced the last canto, and continued its attacks till the following spring.

We may easily imagine with what pleasure Tasso saw this season dawn upon him. A long winter passed in his room; his occupations interrupted by sickness; his frame shaken by the attacks of his

disease, and the gloom which sickness and confinement together never fail to produce,—these were now to be changed for renewed vigour both of mind and body, for bright suns, cheerful society, and the enjoyment of liberty and exercise. I know of few subjects that would make a pleasanter picture than Tasso seated at his table, in one of the early mornings of spring, the blessed light of Heaven and the fresh air giving a transient glow to his pale countenance, and his features animated with the returning inspiration of his Muse, and the eager feeling which attaches to the completion of a favourite design. In the month of April we find him thus writing to his friend, the Cardinal Girolamo Albano, at Rome. "After a distressing ague," says he, "I am, by the mercy of God, restored to health, and after much labour have at last concluded the poem of 'Goffredo.' And this liberty from sickness which I now enjoy, and which I shall also soon enjoy from my poetical occupations, is for nothing else more gratifying to me than for the opportunity it will afford me of attending to your commands. If I shall be enabled to send my poem to press, as I hope to be with the assistance and inspection of some judicious friends, this September, I shall then spend some

months at Rome, which I should not have thought it right to do, had I not fulfilled my obligations to my patron the Duke, which I shall partly seem to have done by the dedication of the poem."

The assistance and inspection of the judicious friends, to whom Tasso makes allusion in the above letter, proved a source of the greatest uneasiness to him. His critics, it would appear, disagreed among themselves in all points, but that of discovering defects in the execution of the work. His replies to their objections are often very curious and ingenious; and we know not which to regard with greater wonder, the subtleties of his metaphysical reviewers, or the keen scholarship with which he answers them. One or two instances will serve to illustrate this subject. The Abate, Niccolò degli Oddi, began his objections with the Invocation: "It does not appear to me correct that Urania should be addressed under the name of Muse, and placed in heaven, the name of Muse signifying nothing but a sound or song, which, according to Aristotle, cannot be in heaven; and sound not being there, the Muses are not there, and, therefore, the invocation is not correct." "It would be sufficient," says Tasso, "to reply that, according to the opinion of Pythagoras, Plato, Marcus Tul-

lius, Dante, and other philosophers, poets, and theologians, both sacred and profane, there is sound in heaven; and to this opinion I may refer either as a poet, philosopher, or theologian; but, abiding by the doctrine of the Peripatetics, I deny the consequence, *In heaven there is not sound, therefore there are not Muses there.* The better argument would be, *There is not music in heaven, therefore there are not Muses there.* But, if there be musical proportions in heaven, it must be that the Muses are there; but without doubt there are, since the whole world is composed with musical harmony, as Plato shows in Timæus, and Plotinus and others who have philosophized on this matter. Nor would Aristotle himself deny that there are intelligible proportions in heaven, as Pythagoras also intimates, according to the opinion of the Peripatetic philosopher, Simplicius, in his first book on heaven, where he treats of this question." Similar objections and answers appear on other points, equally trivial; among others, as to the propriety of representing the Almighty sending the dream to Godfrey: the authority of Aristotle being quoted, "Dreams are not sent by God"—"To which I answer," says Tasso, "that the authority of the Prince of Poets would be sufficient to defend a poet; and Homer represents Jupiter sending a

dream to Agamemnon, the general of the army. But even Aristotle himself, in the very book quoted, makes mention of certain divine or demoniacal dreams, sent from demons, or from God, as St. Thomas particularly notes in his little work De Intellectu."* This is sufficient for a specimen of the kind of criticism to which the Gerusalemme was subjected, and to which its author submitted with a degree of patience and humility, which proves both his anxiety to render his poem as perfect as possible, and the laborious care with which men of genius in former days attended to the revision of their works.

The remarks, however, are far from being always of the trivial character of those above cited, and the reasonings on both sides are sometimes highly interesting. There are few books of criticism, indeed, from which more useful observations may be gathered, than from the " Lettere Poetiche ;" and whoever would rightly understand the scope of the Gerusalemme, or the methods which Tasso employed to render it what it is, must peruse this valuable portion of his prose works, alike interesting to the general reader and the more curious student.

At the head of the committee which our author

* Lettere Poetiche.

formed for the regular examination of the poem, was Scipione Gonzaga, and his associates were Pier Angelio da Barga, Flamminio de' Nobili Lucchese, Silvio Antoniano, and Sperone Speroni. Each of these learned men had his particular alteration to propose. One wished to have the heroes in general, and not Godfrey, mentioned first in the introductory lines. Another, Sperone, objected that the unity was not sufficiently perfect for an epic, and was so earnest in this opinion that his former disposition to quarrel with Tasso was greatly increased by its not being attended to. The episodes formed a fruitful source of controversy: that of Erminia was said to be improbable, it being very unlikely, observed the critics, that a young and timid girl should clothe herself in armour and venture into the hostile camp. That of Armida, on the other hand, was considered too highly coloured; and Antoniano, an ecclesiastic, even proposed to the author to blot out every part of the poem which had any thing to do with love or magic! To this advice Tasso very properly answered, that he conceived the main design of his poem could not be injured by his intermixing the milder pictures of love with the stormy details of war, its battles and misfortunes, and that

the foundation of both his magical and amatory stories might be found in the old chronicles which described the events of the Crusades. He, however, attended with conscientious care to the advice of the churchman as far as the cause of morality seemed concerned, and removed whatever appeared liable to objection on that account. The exquisite episode of Sofronia and Olindo narrowly escaped being sacrificed to these scruples. Tasso changed his mind two or three times on the subject — all his critics, with the exception of Sperone, who had sufficient good taste to appreciate its worth, advising its rejection. Serassi conjectures that Sofronia was intended to represent the Princess Leonora; and it is not improbable that this was the great argument which prevailed with the poet when he resolved to retain the episode.

The last objection which he had to combat respected the general style of the poem, which was said to be much too florid for an epic. He replied, that the ancients had the means of giving an elevation to their language by certain figures of speech, which were not compatible with the genius of modern language, and that therefore, to be poetical now, it was necessary to employ many more

adventitious ornaments than were requisite to the poets of Greece and Rome. While, however, he rejected this portion of the criticism which he had invited on his poem, he made an objection on the same point himself, which, it seems, had not entered the mind of the revisers. "I know not," says he, in a letter to Scipione Gonzaga, "whether you have noted a certain imperfection in my style, namely, this—that I too frequently use a disconnected manner of speaking; so that my meaning is to be discovered rather by the union and dependence of the sense, than by the coupling or conjunction of my words. It is, without doubt, an imperfection, though it has sometimes the appearance of beauty, and even majesty: but the error consists in its frequency. I have learned this defect by my constant study of Virgil, in whom (I speak of the Æneid) it is more especially manifest; whence the saying of Caligula, that it was an arena without a crowd. But, though we may often excuse and defend ourselves by an authority, it would often be much better to correct ourselves. I endeavour to do it in this respect again and again, and I beg you to give some attention to the subject." The confession thus made was taken advantage of by subsequent critics; and the cele-

brated Galileo, in a critique on the Gerusalemme, prefixed to the Orlando Furioso, and written when that great philosopher was a young man, ascribes this peculiarity in Tasso's style, to poverty of thought and invention, which prevented his ideas from flowing in a connected stream, and obliged him to search for conceits, which struck against each other without dependance or union.*

Nor was Tasso contented with the opinion of his professed revisers. He availed himself of the judgment of Luca Scalabrino, a gentleman of Ferrara, who gave him an account of what passed in the conversations of the critics, and accompanied the detail with his private remarks. He also availed himself of his leisure to visit Padua, and consult his old acquaintances on the same subject. His reception evinced the respect in which he was held there, and he returned to Ferrara in company with Pinelli and others, who had so hospitably entertained him.

It appears, however, that his situation was every day becoming less agreeable. The favour he enjoyed with the Duke had raised against him many secret enemies, and, as he discovered their machinations, he grew more and more weary of the part

* Serassi.

he had to play. He had for some time past, therefore, resolved, as soon as his poem was published, to remove to Rome, and live as independently as his means would allow. But he still continued to seek opinions upon its merits, and to labour at its improvement, till at length his anxiety and constant application threw him into an illness, which attacked him after a short visit to Bologna, and for some days prevented him from pursuing his occupation.

It is not a little gratifying to find that, amid all this fatigue and anxiety, our poet had sometimes gleams of hope, which rewarded him for whatever he endured. The improvements he made in his work, which he read from time to time to his patron the Duke, met with the highest approbation, and obtained him many tokens of distinguishing regard, notwithstanding the envy of his enemies. About the same time also, the Princess Lucretia, who, having no offspring, voluntarily agreed to a separation from her consort, returned to Ferrara, and invited Tasso, now enjoying with the Duke the delicious retirement of Belriguardo, to her residence. So great was the attachment Alfonso had formed for the poet, that he very unwillingly yielded to his sister's request; but Tasso,

notwithstanding the respect shown him by both his protectors, resolved, after a brief period, upon setting out for Rome, to the great displeasure of the Princess.

At Rome he was introduced to the Tuscan Ambassador, and also to the Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici, Grand Duke of Florence, who received him in the most courteous manner, and intimated the pleasure he should have in appointing him one of the gentlemen of his court, should he be induced to leave the service of the house of Este. At the same time, he became acquainted with several literary characters of eminence, and especially with Pier Angelio da Barga, who shared in the revision of his poem, and whose friendship for the author of the Gerusalemme was the more estimable, as he had himself begun a poem entitled the Siriade, in Latin, on the same subject, and was driven from the field by his more talented competitor. Most of these acquaintances Tasso owed to the zeal of his ardent friend Scipione Gonzaga, who also found means to make him known to the family of the reigning Pope; and, had he been inclined to promote his fortunes at this time among his new friends, he might probably have placed himself above the necessity of seeking farther patronage.

But, at the end of December 1575, he set out on his return to Ferrara, little contented, says Serassi, with the state of uncertainty in which he found himself, being unwilling, on the one hand, to enter upon a new service, and not seeing, on the other, any easy method of escaping from that in which he was already, so as to avoid offending the Duke and the Princesses.

In his journey, he passed through Siena and Florence, receiving at both places the compliments of their most distinguished men, and arrived at Ferrara by the middle of January 1576. He had the gratification to see that he had lost no portion of his patron's esteem by his absence; but his enemies, it appears, had not ceased to employ their endeavours to supplant him, and the place of the secretary Pigna, a man of great ambition, cunning, and influence, and whose character, it is supposed, is represented in the character of Alethes in the Gerusalemme, was now filled, in consequence of his death, by Doctor Antonio Montecatino, originally the friend of Tasso, but at the present time the most dangerous of his enemies.

For a brief period, however, his thoughts were distracted from the cares of his situation by the arrival of Donna Eleonora Sanvitali, wife of Giulio

Tiene, Count of Scandiano, a lady who united to the charms of youthful beauty, and an amiable disposition, the most elegant accomplishments of mind. She was accompanied by her mother-in-law, Signora Barbara Sanseverina, Countess of Sala, who, by the majesty of her deportment, noble figure, and lively wit, almost rivalled the beauty of her daughter. All Ferrara, it is said, was filled with admiration at the presence of these celebrated women; and the pouting under-lip of the lovely Eleonora, her virgin modesty, the sweetness of her smiles, and the Juno-like air of her relative, set off by a head-dress in the form of a crown, attracted such universal attention at the festivals held in their honour, that Tasso wrote two or three sonnets on the occasion, for which he was rewarded with the approbation of the Duke and the beautiful strangers, but at the same time drew upon himself the farther dislike of his opponents.

Again, therefore, left to reflect upon his circumstances, he every day grew more eager to publish his poem, and resolved to proceed to Venice, at the beginning of Lent, for the purpose of seeing it through the press. But he was hindered in this intention by the breaking out of the plague, which was now ravaging that city; nor was his

impatience in any way diminished by this circumstance, or the continued persuasion of his friend Scipione to seek a more quiet residence under the protection of the Medici. It is curious to trace the workings of Tasso's mind on this occasion. Few men could evince more want of resolution in such a situation; he was in continual anxiety to leave the Court of Ferrara, and had the opportunity of retiring to another where there was a prospect of greater freedom and security than he could ever hope to enjoy with his present patron. But he could not resolve on disclosing his wishes to the Duke, and he in vain sought for an opportunity of making them known in a manner which should save him from the pain of leaving a protector who had never offended him. He even applied for the office of historiographer, which had been held by Pigna, under the idea that it would be refused him, and so afford a plea for his appearing dissatisfied, and retiring from the Court. But this expedient, far from answering his purpose, only served to tighten his bonds. Alfonso granted him the office the instant he made the application, and he wrote to his friend expressing the sorrow he felt at this untoward success.

But thus prevented from leaving Ferrara, he

used his best endeavours to make himself as contented as possible; refurnished his rooms, and collected his books about him, in order to continue the history of the house of Este, which had been left unfinished by his predecessor Pigna. The two Princesses also did all in their power to improve his situation, the Duchess of Urbino by recommending him without ceasing to her brother, and Leonora by fresh instances of liberality, which she was enabled to confer by coming into the enjoyment of part of her mother's fortune.

It was probably owing to the urgent manner in which these ladies insisted on the completion of the Gerusalemme, that he once more turned his attention to its conclusion. But it had suddenly entered his mind that some of his sagacious critics might consider an epic poem without an allegory, a vain and useless composition. He at first was somewhat startled at this idea, and as he had never thought of attaching a subtle *under-theme* to his bright and beautiful relations, a writer less fertile in resources than himself, would have conceived it impossible to add it at this stage of his progress. His letter to Scipione Gonzaga on the subject is highly interesting: "I ingenuously confess the truth," says he: "that when I commenced my

poem, I had no thought of writing an allegory, it appearing to me a vain and useless toil, because every interpreter is accustomed to give an allegory according to his own caprice; nor do good poets ever fail of friends to compose allegories for their poems, and Aristotle, moreover, makes no other mention of the allegory in his Poetics, or in his other works, but as it is *in rerum natura* . . . . But when I was beyond the middle of the poem, and I began to consider the strictness of the times, I began also to think of an allegory, as a thing which ought to smooth every difficulty; but I found it (accommodating things made to those which I had to make), as you will see, not distinct and well ordered in all its parts; so that this order and condition is certainly quite a new labour, and finished only last week. What I say, in general, respecting the allegory, I have not found written in any printed book, but in the book of the mind, so that I may have said, perhaps, something which will not be able to stand the proof. . . . . If, however, I have said any thing not conformable to the reason or nature of the allegory, I shall willingly correct it; but if I have contradicted what is only found in books, which I may happen to have done, I shall take no trouble about it. I read some time ago all

the works of Plato, and the many seeds of that learning which remain in my mind may have produced, it is possible, this fruit, without my being aware of it. Of this I am certain, that the moral doctrine of the allegory is his altogether, but only as it is Aristotle's at the same time, and I have been in a manner forced to copy the one and the other, to produce a conformity in the sentiments. I may have occasionally fallen into error, as it is many years since I read the morals of either Aristotle or Plato, and my only assistance has been a few notes and my recollection. But I fear, above all, not to have succeeded well in attaching this moral philosophy to Christian theology." The letter is too long for me to quote it entire, but the foregoing is the most interesting part of it. Before concluding, he mentions that he thought of publishing the allegory at the beginning of the poem, and of writing an explanation of its usefulness, but that he did not think it necessary that the allegory should agree in every particular to the literal sense, this not being the case even in the most exact ones of Plato, Homer, or Virgil, who are only allegorical here and there; nor in the works of St. Augustine, who expressly says, that not all the circumstances of a figure are to be regarded as

representing something real. With regard to the allegory itself, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to mention that it is founded on the general notion that heroic poetry properly consists of imitation and allegory, the former to rivet the attention, the latter to improve the heart; and that the lives of men may be divided into two classes, the active and the contemplative; the former of which is represented in the Iliad, the latter in the Odyssey and the Commedia of Dante. But farther, to represent the active or civil life, many personages are required, while the contemplative is imaged by only one. According to these principles, Tasso observes, he founded his allegory; the Christian army, composed of various princes and soldiers, signifying the natural man, consisting of soul and body, and of a soul, not simple, but divided into many and various faculties. Jerusalem, a strong city, placed on a rough and mountainous tract, and to which the chief aim of the army is directed, figures civil or public felicity, while Godfrey himself represents the ruling intellect, Rinaldo, Tancred, and others being the inferior powers of the mind, and the soldiers, or bulk of the army, the body. The conquest again with which the poem concludes, is an emblem of political

felicity, but as this ought not to be the final object of a Christian man, the poem ends with the adoration of Godfrey, it being thereby signified that the intellect, fatigued in public exertions, should finally seek repose in prayer, and in contemplating the blessings of a happy and eternal life.*

Tasso treated the idea of writing this allegory with apparent levity, but the pains he took in explaining his design, and the manner in which he mentioned it to his friends, intimate no slight anxiety about the matter, and there seems little reason to doubt that he found considerable pleasure in employing his knowledge of philosophy to such a profitable purpose as he supposed this to be. We have in these days no value for such displays of philosophic ingenuity, and the reason is, not that we are more poetical, but that we are less contemplative; civil action, to imitate the language of the allegorists, engrossing all men's attention, and seldom suffering the intellect to mature itself by reflection; the mind, like the body, becoming stinted in its growth if too early subjected to violent or incessant action, or if not allowed an interchange of repose and activity. But to return to our narrative.

* Allegoria della Ger. Lib.

The correction of the poem had already occupied a considerable time, and Tasso lost all patience at the dilatoriness of which his critics were guilty in sending their corrections of the last cantos. Sperone, it seems, was chiefly in fault on this occasion, and the distressed author exclaimed indignantly, "I wish for no patron or master, but he who gives me bread; and I desire to be free not only in judgment, but in writing and working. How great is my misfortune! every body seeks to play the tyrant over me." To this cause of disturbance were added those which he suffered from his enemies at Court, who, he believed, employed their emissaries to intercept his letters, and even break open his desk, in order to discover the means of involving him in trouble with his patron. But the Prince was apparently uninfluenced by the arts practised against his poet, and even increased his attentions, sending him at one time a case containing twelve vessels of the most precious wine to recruit his spirits. The Princess Leonora also seemed more anxious than ever to manifest her regard, and took him with her when she went to spend a few days at her beautiful villa of Consandoli on the Po.

The recreation he enjoyed in the country re-

stored in some measure his tranquillity, but it was soon again destroyed on his return to Ferrara. The favour he possessed with the Princess and with the Countess of Scandiano and her mother-in-law, was not at all adapted to diminish the dislike conceived against him by so many of the courtiers. Among his chief opponents was Battista Guarini, and a war of verses was waged between these rivals in love and fame. But Tasso was exposed to a much more dangerous contest at the same time. The person whom he suspected of breaking open his cabinet, was one Maddolò, but hitherto no occasion had brought this man in contact with his injured acquaintance. It happened, however, that Tasso at length met him as he was crossing the court of the Palace. The only sign of resentment he manifested was a serious rebuke of his perfidy, but to this Maddolò replied in language so gross and insulting, that the poet could no longer refrain himself, but struck him a blow in the face. At this, the weak and dishonourable courtier fled with precipitation, but soon returned with his brothers, and following Tasso, endeavoured to wound him in the back; the attempt, however, proved unsuccessful, and the whole party immediately retreated, and made the best of their way to Tus-

cany. Alfonso expressed himself very angry at this circumstance, and made some effort to bring Maddolò to justice, but did not commit Tasso to the confinement of his chamber, under pretence, as it is said, of providing for his safety.* Manso, indeed, who asserts that this was done, expresses his belief that it was thence that Tasso's mind became disturbed, and gave the first signs of approaching malady; but he is contradicted by other and more careful authors, and even by Tasso himself, who, in a letter written at this period, mentions his having kept his chamber for some days, but makes no allusion to constraint.

But the agitation he had suffered was no sooner calmed, than he was still more deeply affected by hearing that his poem had been pirated, and that it was already being printed in several parts of Italy. Worn out as he was with the labour and anxiety he had so long endured to render his work as correct as possible, he had ample reason to be greatly distressed at such intelligence, and the first step he took was to implore the Duke to interfere in the business, and prevent the circulation of any edition which might thus appear. Alfonso attended to his desire without delay, and

* Serassi. Manso.

wrote to the princes of other states, requesting them to stop the illegal publication of the Gerusalemme, and his example was followed by the Pope, who exerted his authority in a similar manner.

While these powerful men were employing their influence in his favour, his friend, the Count Ferrante Tassoni, succeeded in persuading him to visit Modena, where he hoped by change of scene and lively society, to relieve him from the melancholy which was rapidly gaining possession of his mind. But neither conversation, nor the delights of music, nor even the society of the celebrated Signora Tarquinia Molza, could soothe his perturbed spirits; and he returned to Ferrara, having gained no other advantage from his journey than the advice of the good Count to bear the persecutions of his enemies in the best manner he was able. This advice had the effect of making him resolve not to leave Ferrara, and in a letter to Scipione Gonzaga, dated January 7th, 1577, when he was still at Modena, he says, that he enjoyed less quiet there than at Ferrara—that he would never leave the Duke, since besides having received so many favours from him, that, if he spent his life in his service, he could never repay them, he could

hope for no greater repose in any other state. "The persecutions," he concludes, "which I suffer, are of such a nature, that I should suffer them elsewhere as much as at Ferrara." He repeats the same sentiments in another letter written a few days after.

No part of Tasso's life is more melancholy than the period at which we are now arrived. He was on the point of ushering into the world a work which was destined to crown him with the greenest laurels the Muse ever wore, and thus obtain a rich and ample reward for all his labours. But before he could receive this precious fruit of his toil, he was becoming the victim of the direst evil to which humanity is liable;—while the morning of his glory was dawning around him, darkness was gathering in his soul, and we see him become more dependant and helpless than ever, in the first hour the world paid universal homage to his genius.

The melancholy to which he had now been sometime subject, assumed shortly after his return to Ferrara a more alarming character. There is no doubt that he suffered many annoyances and probably injuries, from his rivals at Court, but it also seems likely that his nervous excitement had greatly magnified the idea of danger, and led him to dread

an enemy in the most indifferent observer of his actions. Even his servants at last became objects of his fear, and he wrote to the Marchese del Monte, beseeching him to send him one, and to join to his own authority that of the Duke of Urbino in threatening the servant with the weightiest punishment, if he should ever be guilty of any treachery against him. Shortly after this letter was written, the idea recurred, which had troubled his mind some time before, that he had allowed himself to indulge heretical opinions while studying philosophy, and that he was subject to the wrath of the Inquisition, which he imagined his enemies were endeavouring to excite against him. He, therefore, set out for Bologna, as he had done from similar motives two years since, and presented himself before the fathers of the Inquisition, who, finding nothing in him deserving of punishment, dismissed him with some profitable counsel.

But his fears were not in any way diminished by this acquittal. He now determined to preserve a perfect silence, lest his adversaries should take advantage of some incautious word, and indulged a notion that he had been only suffered to escape the Inquisition this time that some more effectual means might be found to ruin him utterly. He

also began to think that some violent death was preparing for him, and that he must certainly fall a victim either to poison or the dagger. The Duke and the Princesses did all in their power to cure him of these gloomy imaginations, and had him frequently with them, but one evening, the 16th of June, 1577, when in the apartment of the Duchess of Urbino, he suddenly seized a knife, and aimed a stroke at the back of one of the attendants. The alarm occasioned by this circumstance was extreme, and as it was now concluded that he must be labouring under insanity, he was arrested, and placed in confinement in one of the apartments of the palace court.

The unfortunate poet was no sooner in the quiet of his chamber, than the sense of his situation overwhelmed him with despair. His first resolution, on somewhat recovering the power of reflection, was to write to the Duke, begging him to take pity on his distress. The letter was conveyed to the Prince by Guido Coccapani, and Alfonso consented to his being liberated, or at least restored to his own apartment, where he directed him to be attended by the most skilful physicians, and by his own servants. Finding him growing better every day, he again took him to Belriguardo, the

retirement of which and the delight he had formerly taken in its delicious scenes, would he hoped complete his cure. Tasso, in speaking of this period, expresses his lasting feeling of gratitude for the kindness his patron thus manifested: "In the beginning of my persecutions," says he, "he exercised towards me the affection not of a patron, but of a father and a brother—an affection which seldom finds a place in the minds of the great."*

But no care or attention could calm his mind for any length of time. Before leaving Ferrara, Alfonso had persuaded him to set his conscience at rest in respect to religious fears, by again presenting himself before an officer of the Inquisition, which he did, and again received the same assurances that he was a faithful child of the Church, together with a full remission of all the errors of which he might at any time have been guilty. The Prince acted in the same manner in regard to the suspicions he entertained respecting his friendship, assuring him that he considered him a most faithful servant, and had never doubted his fidelity. He had arrived, however, but a short time at Belriguardo, before he was disturbed with the idea that he had not been properly absolved from his errors, and that

* Discorso sopra vari accidenti della sua vita.

the Duke was not really at peace with him, but only pretended to be so. This being the case, Alfonso willingly yielded to his request to be sent back to Ferrara, and allowed to retire to the convent of the fathers of St. Francis, where he spent several days in meditation and religious conversation with the friars, writing in the mean time to the heads of the Inquisition at Rome, expressing his desire to be absolved by them, as the Inquisitor at Ferrara had not done his duty towards him; and to the Duke at the same time, still insisting on the cruel machinations of his persecutors. Alfonso, however, was now weary of his applications, and forbade his writing either to him or the Duchess his sister any more. This completed the misery of the unfortunate Tasso—he felt more than ever assured that his destruction was concluded upon, and seizing the opportunity of being left alone and unwatched, he fled precipitately from the city.

Trembling every step he set lest he should be pursued by the officers of the Duke, he took his way through the most solitary roads, avoiding the towns and villages which lay on his route. Sometimes he lost himself, and having no money to obtain a guide, wandered about in terror and uncertainty. After a few days, however, he found him-

self in the district of Abruzzo, not far distant from Naples, and there meeting with a poor rustic, he changed his rich mantle for the clothes of the countryman, who gave him a night's lodging in his hovel, after which he pursued his way to Sorrento.

Cornelia, Tasso's only sister, was still resident in that town, and had been some time a widow. To her house the unfortunate poet bent his steps, and on arriving there found her alone with her servants, her two sons being from home. Tasso preserving his disguise, and altogether changed by grief and sickness from what he was when they parted in their youth, was wholly unknown to Cornelia, and presenting her a letter which he said he brought from her brother, she asked him respecting the distressing intelligence it conveyed. He answered her by recounting all the misfortunes to which he had been subjected, till, seeing that her grief was becoming too excessive for her delicate frame, he could no longer restrain himself, but gently preparing her for the disclosure, made himself known as her poor fugitive and oppressed brother.

In conformity with his wishes, she promised to keep his arrival perfectly secret, and acquainting only her sons and a near relation with the truth, gave out that he was a cousin of hers come to settle

some affairs. By this her constant and affectionate care, the prescriptions of skilful physicians, the opportunity of writing in peace and as he pleased, and frequent walks, in company with his nephews, among the rich and picturesque scenes of the neighbourhood, his mind was restored to a greater degree of tranquillity than it had enjoyed for some months past. But his recovery had scarcely commenced, when he resolved upon writing to his patron and the Princesses, begging to be restored to favour. This application, however, met with no reply, except from Leonora, who informed him, that she had used her influence for him in vain. This greatly affected him, and as soon as he was recovered from a sickness, into which it is probable he was thrown by the disappointment, he determined, notwithstanding the affectionate intreaties of Cornelia, to resign himself into the hands of Alfonso, and with that intention set out for Rome, and on his arrival there proceeded at once to the house of the Prince's agent, Giulio Masetto, afterwards Bishop of Reggio.

By the advice of Scipione Gonzaga, and others of his friends, he was persuaded to rest contented with their writing to Alfonso, imploring his pardon, and that his clothes and writings might be sent

him to Rome. But this was followed by another application, begging that he might be restored to his former situation; and, after some time, Alfonso replied to these letters, accounting for his delay in sending the writings, by saying, that several of them were in the hands of the Duchess of Urbino, who was too ill at the time to collect them, and that if Tasso would promise not to be guilty again of the same conduct, but submit himself to the direction of the physicians, he would be again received at the court of Ferrara with affection.

This answer of the Duke once more filled the heart of the poet with hope; and, availing himself of the return of the Prince's Ambassador, he left Rome in company with that nobleman, and reached Ferrara in good spirits, though greatly enfeebled by his late illness. He had, however, scarcely received the first kind attentions of his patron, when his former suspicions returned with all their former force: he believed that his compositions were despised, and he could not repress his indignation at finding the applications which he made to have his writings restored, treated with neglect. To complete his distress, both the Duke and the Princesses ceased at last to speak to him; and, not able to endure this treatment, he again fled from the

court, and hastened to Mantua. He had hoped, that the reigning Duke, out of respect for the memory of his father, would assist him in his present distress; but he was treated with the most discouraging coldness by all except the young Prince Vincenzio, whose age prevented him from being of any essential service.

Thus disappointed, without friends or money, poor Tasso was obliged to sell the ruby ring which had been given him in happier days by the Princess Lucretia, and also a beautiful collar which he wore, according to the fashion of the times; but the person to whom he sold them, taking advantage either of his distress or his carelessness, gave him only twenty scudi for the former, which was valued at seventy, and less for the latter than the gold was worth, of which it was fabricated. With the money, however, which they brought him, he proceeded to Padua, and thence to Venice, where, though noticed by few other persons, he had the good fortune to obtain the regard of Matteo Veniero, who wrote a letter in his favour to the Duke of Tuscany, in which he describes him as being apparently of unsound mind, but exhibiting greater signs of affliction than of madness, and as being chiefly distressed at not recovering his book

from the Duke Alfonso; "though he says," continues the letter, "that it is not of vital importance, as he could make a better in three years." From some cause or other, the recommendation was unattended to, and Tasso, having nothing to detain him at Venice, determined to throw himself on the generosity of the Duke of Urbino. Nor had he reason to repent of the confidence he placed in the noble disposition of Francesco Maria. He was treated with the most affectionate regard; and, such was the peace and happiness he enjoyed at his court, that he was contented, he said, to have suffered all the misery he had undergone, since it had tended to place him where he then was.

His celebrated canzone, beginning "O del grand' Apennino," was commenced on his arrival, and while the Duke was still absent at Castel Durante. The readiness with which his prayer was attended to is supposed to have rendered him indifferent as to concluding the poem. He also received soon after a letter from his sister, expressing her anxiety at having heard of his second flight; but he answered her in the most encouraging manner, saying, that he might return to Ferrara whenever he chose, and that several Princes were ready to receive him—assurances, it is thought, dictated by his desire to

lessen the fears of Cornelia, and having little foundation in reality.

After a short time, however, he began to entertain fears that, notwithstanding the favour shown him by the Duke, he was not sufficiently secure against his enemies, and rejecting, therefore, the counsel of his friends, he secretly took his departure from Urbino. He directed his steps to Turin, intending to seek the protection of the Duke of Savoy, to whom he had written a short time before on the subject. In the course of his journey, he came one evening to a gentleman's house on the road, between Novara and Vercelli, and, spending the night there, he was so delighted with the hospitality of his host, and the domestic comfort which appeared in the family, that he wrote a dialogue entitled, "Il Padre di Famiglia," in which he most beautifully describes the kind Cavalier, and the manner in which they spent the evening.

In the morning he was accompanied by this gentleman and his sons to Vercelli, whence, having no longer the means of providing himself with a horse, he pursued his journey on foot to Turin. On arriving at the gates he was completely exhausted, and so disordered were his looks, and so tattered his garments, from the distance he had

travelled, that the guard rudely refused to admit him; and he would probably have been left to perish without food or shelter, had not Angelo Ingegneri, a Venetian scholar, to whom he was known, providentially passed at the time. Greatly affected at seeing a man so celebrated as Tasso in such a condition, he immediately led him into the city, and accompanied him to the palace of the Marquis of Este, by whom he was most hospitably entertained, and assured of continued protection, as he was also by the Archbishop of Rovere. Soon after his arrival he received a letter from his friend the Cardinal Albano, who congratulated him on his having obtained so excellent a protector as the Marquis of Este; and, at the same time, advised him in the tenderest manner to quiet himself as much as possible, and follow the advice of the physicians. He for some time so far attended to this wholesome counsel as to be able to settle himself to composition, and wrote a Dialogue on Nobility, and some pieces of poetry in praise of the Marchioness and others. In speaking of the Dialogue, which he mentioned in a letter to Cataneo, Secretary to the Cardinal Albano, he says, that it might serve as a specimen of what he could do, if he wrote in quiet and with his books about him.

But his mind was still directed to Ferrara, and he at length persuaded the Cardinal to write to the Duke in his favour; and so successful was the application, that Alfonso not only listened to his request, namely, to have his books, his writings, a few clothes, and a hundred scudi given him, but seemed to intimate, that if he would resolve upon undergoing a course of medicine, and be careful in his conduct for the future, he might return to Ferrara. Tasso was overjoyed at the opportunity which he thus appeared to have gained of once more trying his fortune at the court of his early patron; and, thinking that his services as a poet would, no doubt, be required at the approaching nuptials of the Duke with his second wife, Margaret Gonzaga, he rejected all the persuasions of his more prudent friends, and reached Ferrara on the 21st of February, 1579. Instead, however, of finding himself kindly received, as on a former occasion, and as he had ardently hoped would be the case, he could not obtain an audience of either the Duke or the Princesses, or of any of the ministers; and, from the contemptuous looks of the inferior persons about the court, he saw too clearly that he no longer retained any place in the affections of his patron.

His situation was now more distressing than

ever; and it is not unlikely that, amid the festivities which filled every other heart with gladness, and amid which he found himself solitary and despised, without a friend to comfort him, and with scarcely sufficient to provide for his necessities, his mind often reverted to his first arrival at Ferrara, when similar scenes were taking place, and he was equally solitary, but had all the hopes and glowing prospects of youth to cheer him. Heart-broken at his disappointment, he wrote to the Cardinal Albano, relating the manner in which he was treated, notwithstanding the encouragement the Duke had given him to return, and begging him to renew his mediation, that he might either be restored to his former condition, or at least receive his manuscripts and some trifling provision. But it was all to no purpose. His situation and the conduct of the Prince continued unchanged, till his rage and indignation getting completely master of his prudence, he ceased to treat the names of his patron and the courtiers with forbearance, but poured out against them a torrent of the bitterest abuse, recalling all the praise he had once bestowed upon them, or converting it into satire.

Alfonso was not long in discovering how Tasso was vilifying him; and it is at this period of the

poet's memoirs that the memory of his patron begins to wear the shade that has rendered it so unamiable in the eyes of posterity. Hitherto, the conduct of Alfonso appears to have been such, that, had he continued it, he would have merited being placed among the most respected benefactors of genius. He had left nothing undone to soothe the irritated mind of Tasso; had taken him with him to his favourite villa, reasoned with him on the folly of his apprehensions, written letters for him when he was distressed respecting the pirated edition of his poem, and borne both his melancholy humours and even violence with the utmost patience and forbearance; so that, up to the present time, he seems to have had a very fair claim to the gratitude of the unfortunate poet. The severity he was now about to exercise afforded a terrible contrast to his previous kindness. Highly angered at the expressions which Tasso had used against him, or else regarding them as an additional evidence of his insanity, he ordered him to be secured, and immediately conveyed to the Hospital of St. Anna, an institution for lunatics. In whichever light he considered the conduct of the poet, this procedure was unjustifiable. He had allowed him to return to Ferrara, and, sensible as he was of the weak

and irritable condition of his mind, he was bound by the common law of humanity to do nothing to increase the disposition to malady. Instead of which, he treated him in a manner that would have inflamed a much sounder intellect than poor Tasso's had been for a long time past. To the destruction of his hopes he had added the wounds inflicted by a cold and haughty contempt, and he had every reason to expect that the feelings of the injured man would show themselves in words or actions different to those of a calm and cunning courtier. But even supposing that the conduct of Tasso was more the effect of lunacy than of passion, which certainly ought not to have been punished so severely, he surely deserved a milder treatment than to be seized and conveyed to a common madhouse. He had, it is true, no claims upon the kindness of Alfonso, except those which genius has on all men, and especially on Princes; but those claims are sacred, and Alfonso sinned against the noblest feelings that inspire the human soul, by immuring Tasso in a dungeon. His thoughts were dark and bewildered, but "the light from heaven" was still in his soul, and that ought to have rendered his person as inviolable and sacred as that of a sovereign—genius being at least as plainly the gift of God as a crown.

Manso represents the whole affair of Tasso's being sent to St. Anna, as resulting from the Duke's great kindness towards him, and as if Alfonso had no other reason for doing it, than his anxiety to make him submit to the physicians, but that his plan unfortunately failed, the malady being greatly increased by the means employed to cure it. If the Prince had really no object in view but the restoration of Tasso's health, his proceeding was certainly an extraordinary one, and proves either an extreme indifference as to the misery which his unfortunate dependant would have to endure, or the most entire ignorance of his real condition. Tasso, it is true, had been once on the point of committing a dangerous violence; but this had been so little thought of, that he was very soon after re-admitted into favour. With the exception of this single circumstance, his conduct had only indicated an unsettled state of mind, resulting from great irritability and disordered nerves. So well was this known to be the case, that Alfonso had, till the present period, treated him accordingly, and behaved to him as a person whose spirits had been worn out by over-exertion, and required to be soothed by repose and kind assurances. Nor were the means he for some time employed with this

view unsuccessful. At Belriguardo, Tasso became composed, was fast recovering, and would probably have been wholly restored to health, had he been kept there longer, and treated uniformly with similar gentleness. The same effects were produced by the attentions he received from his sister, and the delight he felt in wandering with kind and cheerful companions among the rural scenes of Sorrento; the consequence also of his residence both at Urbino and Turin, time only having been wanting to complete his cure. Alfonso, therefore, if he really desired his recovery, was guilty of the grossest folly in sending him to St. Anna. To have restored him to health, he only needed to have given him the free range of his country mansion, allowed him every opportunity of completing his poem in tranquillity, and assured him of his continued friendship, by punishing the low-minded creatures who had not shown him the respect he merited.

But another cause is assigned for Tasso's insanity and the severity of his patron—his love, namely, for Leonora. I shall not now wait to make any observation upon this much disputed subject, reserving what little I have to say to the conclusion of the memoir; the mind, however, would will-

ingly indulge the idea that there must have been some greater cause for the poet's imprisonment than a few hasty words, and that if he was subjected to it because of having hurt the princely pride of his patron, his offence had in some measure touched the feelings of the Duke, so as to render his anger more reasonable than it would have been from any common cause of resentment.

Whatever was the origin of Tasso's confinement, which commenced some time in March 1579, it threw him into a state of indescribable terror, and he remained several days insensible. As soon as he was restored to consciousness he wrote to his friend Scipione Gonzaga, and there is no passage in his works so affecting as the expression it contains of his feelings. "Alas! alas!" exclaims he, "I had determined to write, besides two epic poems on noble subjects, four tragedies, of which I had formed the plan, and many other excellent works in prose, so that there might be an eternal remembrance of me in the world, for I had proposed to myself the attainment of the highest glory and renown. But, oppressed with such a load of misery, I have abandoned all thoughts of glory and honour, and should be sufficiently happy if I could free myself from the thirst by which I am tormented, and if, like some poor

peasant, I might pass my life in a humble cottage—if not well, which I shall never be again, at least not so grievously afflicted; if not honoured, at least not despised; possessing, if not the rights of men, at least those of brutes, which are suffered to quench freely in the streams and fountains that thirst with which, it pleases me to repeat it, I am burnt up. Neither do I fear the greatness of the evil so much as its continuance, which is horrible to my imagination, especially as in such a state I can neither write nor study. The dread of a continual imprisonment greatly increases my melancholy, as do also the indignity with which I am treated, the squalidness of my beard, and hair, and garments, and the filth with which I am surrounded. Above all, I am afflicted by the solitude in which I am placed, solitude being my sworn and natural enemy, and having been so terrible to me even in my best days, that I was running about at all hours, even the most unseasonable, to find company."

The condition of Tasso may be sufficiently understood from this distressing letter. He was treated, in fact, by the Prior and Chaplain of the hospital as a confirmed madman, and as not claiming any more pity than the most hardened of their poor and miserable patients. The former of these

officers of the establishment was Agostino Mosti, a man of letters, who, it might have been supposed, would have treated him with consideration on account of the similarity of their pursuits; but the sympathy which he denied was granted by his nephew, who, with the ingenuousness of youth, and inspired with the highest veneration for Tasso's genius, used every means in his power to comfort him, relieving his painful solitude by passing hour after hour in his cell, conversing on philosophy, or copying the verses and letters which the poor captive dictated for his amusement, or was too weak and nervous to write himself.*

Oppressed as he was in spirit, he summoned sufficient resolution to compose two canzoni, the one to Alfonso, the other to the Princesses, in both of which he expresses the same deep feeling of despair as in the letter quoted above, but accompanies the picture of his own misery with graceful compliments to his persecutor, calling him his first benefactor, and saying, that he complained with him and to him, but not of him. But neither his own entreaties, nor the applications made in his favour by several princes and noblemen, met with any other reply from Alfonso than that as soon

* Serassi.

as he was restored to health he should be liberated, as he loved and esteemed him as much as the friends who desired his freedom. But was it necessary, it might have been asked the Duke, to leave him in the most wretched condition of body to cure the disease of his mind? or was he likely to be soon relieved of a dark and overwhelming melancholy by being left in frightful solitude, and as if forgotten by all the world except the keeper who watched over him? How very nearly did he extinguish by such treatment that noble flame which shone with sufficient lustre to keep his own name remembered in the world, as well as that of its venerable possessor. Speaking of the effects which confinement even more than illness had upon his mind, Tasso pathetically says, "My mind becomes slow of thought, my fancy indolent in imagining, my senses negligent in ministering to them images of things; my hand refuses to write, and my pen even to execute its office; I seem, indeed, to be frozen, and am oppressed by stupor and giddiness in all I attempt to do." The following sentence is curious: "Nor shall I ever be able, without some demonstration of courteous favour, to revive in myself that vivacity, and those

spirits not less generous, perhaps, in prose than in verse."

The courteous kindness for which he longed was afforded him by the amiable Vicenzio Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua, and comforted in some degree by his attentions, and the hopes he conceived from his influence with Alfonso, he felt his mind suddenly recover some of its original vigour, and he composed two of his most admired dialogues. "Il Messaggero" and "Il Gonzaga, ovvero del Piacer Onesto."

But the faint gleam of hope which he had allowed himself to cherish from the visit of Vicenzio, was suddenly clouded by a circumstance which, situated as he was, affected him as a calamity of the worst description. His Gerusalemme, on which he had expended the best powers of his mind, and the best years of his life, afforded him even in his deepest affliction a sort of refuge from the gloomy despair which overshadowed every thing beside. Could he ever publish it, there was reason for thinking that it would furnish him with pecuniary help, excite his friends to exert themselves more actively in his behalf, and win that glory for him on which his thoughts were so ardently intent, till the weight

of his distress was too great for even ambition to buoy up. But whatever had been his hopes, they were now all destroyed by the intelligence that his poem was printed and published at Venice by Domenico Cavalcalupo, and under the direction of Celio Malaspina, who had possessed himself of an imperfect copy of the manuscript. Tasso's rage on hearing of this circumstance was equal to his sorrow, and he instantly wrote to his friend Scipione Gonzaga complaining in bitter terms that the Republic of Venice should have allowed such an act of injustice, the poem, incorrect and unfinished as it appeared, being very different to what the public would have seen it if it had come, as it ought to have done, from the hands of the author.

It was not long, however, before Tasso overcame his indignation sufficiently to set about repairing any injury his reputation might have suffered, by the composition of other works. The Gerusalemme, or Goffredo, as it was entitled, appeared at Venice in 1580, and shortly after he wrote the dialogue Il Padre di Famiglia, already alluded to. He also revised the minor poems he had composed during the last two years, and having collected them into a volume, sent it to the Princesses,

with a letter expressive of his continued devotion to their service, notwithstanding the ills he suffered through the machinations of designing men.

The Duchess of Urbino, it is said, was greatly pleased with this manifestation of Tasso's tried fidelity; but Leonora had been for some time suffering under a dangerous malady, and was now too near her end to be able to take delight even in the Muse of Tasso. The news of her sickness filled the mind of the unfortunate poet with fresh sorrow, but taking advantage of his acquaintance with the celebrated Father Francesco Panigarola of Modena, then on a visit at the Court, he desired that he would humbly kiss her hand in his name, and express his distress at her illness and his anxiety for her recovery, intimating at the same time, that he was too ill to write melancholy verses, but would be rejoiced to send her any he could compose of a cheerful character. Leonora died soon after this message was sent, and it is not known whether it ever reached her ear. Her death, which occurred February 10, 1581, was lamented by most of the poets of the day, but Tasso's muse was either still incompetent to elegiac subjects, or he had private reasons for not composing any verses expressly on the event. The character of

this celebrated woman was pure and dignified. Her mind was richly stored with the learning of the age, but it had lost none of its youthful susceptibility to the beauties of poetry when the bloom and the gaiety of youth had passed away. If Tasso loved her with the passion which has been supposed, and she shared in his feelings, there is much to admire in her conduct towards him. Without compromising the dignity of her sex and station, she appears to have uniformly treated him with the regard due to his genius and misfortunes: when the Duke and her sister Lucretia refused to answer his letters, she took upon herself the task of advising him, and there is reason to believe that in all his troubles she was his kind and constant advocate. All that is known of her conduct in these respects, favours the idea that she was as amiable as she was accomplished, and that neither her high rank, the severe school in which she had been educated, nor the punctilious maxims of her brother's Court, prevented her from manifesting her attachment to, if not her love for Tasso. Her general conduct was equally worthy of praise, and so beloved was she by the people at large, as well as her own relatives, that when Ferrara was nearly destroyed by an earthquake in the year 1570, its

preservation was ascribed to the efficacy of her prayers.*

From whatever cause it happened that our poet wrote no formal lamentation on the death of Leonora, his attention was at that time recalled to the Gerusalemme. Many literary men of eminence were disgusted at the injustice which had been done him in the Venice edition, and Angelo Ingegneri, having in his possession a copy of the poem, determined on publishing it with the assistance of Veniero and his uncle the Bishop of Capodistria. At first he thought of accompanying it with notes, arguments to the several books, and the allegory; but in order to stop the circulation of the Venice edition, he would not delay its appearance for these illustrations, and had it printed immediately, both at Parma and at Casalmaggiore, where the publication took place in February 1581. These editions were speedily dispersed through the whole of Italy and the rest of Europe, and had the good effect of not only gaining for Tasso the glory he merited, but of making Malaspina ashamed of his imperfect publication, the errors of which he partly corrected in a reprint, adding various readings, and a discourse by Filippo Pigafetta, on the two titles

* Serassi.

which had been applied to the poem. In this treatise allusion is made to Tasso's misfortune, and to the Duke's treatment of him, which being the result, it is said, of the greatest liberality, merited the praise and gratitude of all men!

These impressions of the poem had scarcely appeared, when a young gentleman of Ferrara, Febo Bonnà by name, an enthusiastic admirer of Tasso, resolved upon bringing out an edition in that city. In this spirited undertaking, he was greatly assisted by the poet Guarini, who had taken the pains to correct the Venice edition, adding to it the six cantos which were wanting to complete the poem, and several passages which had also been left out. The work appeared at Ferrara in the month of June, printed in quarto, and with a dedication to Alfonso, purporting that it was presented in the name of Tasso, who by this means received the honour due to him, as the Duke did a production to which he had an equal title. To this edition was also added the allegory, which had not accompanied any of those previously published. But either on account of some incorrectness, or the omission of the arguments by Orazio Ariosto, the impression met with an indifferent reception at the Court, and another appeared about a month after, well worthy

of the talent and industry of the editor. Three months had not passed away when it was followed by one equally excellent at Parma; and thus, in the course of about nine months, the Gerusalemme had been eight times printed in Italy, and was already so esteemed in France, that an edition had been called for and issued from the press of that country.

But while his work was thus winning its way through Europe, and men of all countries and classes were loud in its praise, the unfortunate author was pining away his days in misery, suffering not merely solitude, but the worst horrors of a loathsome prison. We chill with terror as we hear him pathetically lament in one of his letters, that he was prevented from writing by the constant shrieks of the poor maniacs, whose cells adjoined his own; that he was left to the mercy of the keeper and the creatures of the Court, who attended to none of his wants though he was so sick and feeble, and that while the publishers of his poem had gained more than three thousand ducats by its sale, they had none of them given him a single scudo; even Febo Bonnà, who had made him the fairest promises, paying no attention to his neces-

sities, but spending the money he had acquired, among the gay dames and cavaliers of Paris.

The depth of misery in which he was thus sunk, urged him to reiterated exertions for relief, and he prayed the Duke to remove him to another prison, or to better rooms in the hospital. His entreaties were seconded by those of Cocoapani, and Laura Boiardi Tiene; and they were so far successful, that he was not only allowed more liberty, but received an intimation from the Prince of Mantua, that efforts would be made to obtain his release. His hopes were still farther raised, when the Secretary of the Princess Marfisa da Este carried him the information that his mistress would in a few days take him with her to her country seat. Her influence with Alfonso was sufficient to obtain him this indulgence, and though he was narrowly watched all the time, and obliged at the close of the day to return to St. Anna, this brief change of scene, and the very breath of the free air, filled his heart with indescribable emotions of pleasure. He also met at the house of Marfisa, the celebrated poetess Tarquinia Molza, and Ginevra Marzia, whose conversation and flattering attentions contributed greatly to increase his satisfaction. At the same

time also he received intelligence that his sister had lately married a gentleman of good family and fortune, who was well inclined towards him, and these agreeable circumstances were shortly followed by another, the gift of fifty scudi, generously sent him by Gonzaga, Lord of Guastalla, which in his present situation afforded him no little comfort. The generous regard which the poet Guarini showed for his reputation was still more consoling:—taking the edition of the Rime, published the year before by the younger Aldus, he corrected the numerous errors which deformed it, and printed it afresh with the addition of a second part. Learned men also, of the first distinction, visited with delight and awe the cell of him whose fame was so widely spread, and among others, Aldo Manucci, who gave him some books of his printing and spent nearly the whole of the two days he stayed at Ferrara, in the Hospital of St. Anna. Manucci was followed by the celebrated painter, Francesco Terzi of Bergamo, who presented him with a copy of his magnificent work "Immagini de' Principi della Casa d'Austria;" and soon after, he received from Bernardo Giunti, a wealthy printer of Venice, a volume of his prose elegantly printed, and accompanied with a letter from Giunti, begging him to trust

some other portion of his works to his hands, and assuring him that it should be printed with the utmost care. Tasso cautiously replied that he had been so badly used by those who had hitherto printed his works, that he must pause before he committed himself anew. He gave him, however, full permission to pursue his present undertaking, and concluded by requesting that he would send him Dante's Treatises de Vulgare Eloquentia, and de Monarchia, and his Vita Nuova, of which he stood much in need, saying that he would pay for them either with money, or in any way Giunti might wish. He wrote in a similar style to other printers, whom he accused in general of treating him as bad as Princes; and in this opinion he was still farther confirmed shortly after by the conduct of Vasalini, a bookseller of Ferrara, who, without his permission or knowledge, published a collection of his pieces, both prose and verse, which were not only incorrectly printed, but were many of them such as the poet never intended to see the light, and were also mixed up with some not his own. To add to the evil, there were expressions in the dialogue entitled Gonzaga, which were near disgracing him at the Court of the Medici, and would have done so but for the good sense of the Grand-duke.

The gleams of hope which had lately alleviated the deep melancholy of the unfortunate poet, appear to have been dissipated almost as soon as they broke forth. In a letter which he wrote to Girolamo Mercuriale, Professor of Medicine at Padua, he describes himself as still labouring under a distressing depression of spirits, and all the other symptoms of a disordered nervous system. "I have a continual murmuring in my ears," says he, "and my imagination is incessantly disturbed with disagreeable thoughts, which prevent my studying for ten minutes together. The more I endeavour to steady my mind, the more am I distracted with various fancies and distressing feelings. My head, after eating, becomes hot and heavy; in every sound I hear, there seems to be a human voice, and I often fancy that inanimate things are speaking. The night also is disturbed with dreams, and my imagination takes up again the discourse I have held with different persons on my misfortune." He then begs the physician to prescribe for him, and received for answer that he must apply a cautery to his leg; that he must abstain from wine and beer, and use a conserve, for which a receipt would be sent him. Tasso in a letter to a friend, remarks on these directions, that he would be care-

ful of the state of his blood, and apply a cautery to his arm; but that to apply one to his leg and abstain from wine were remedies too troublesome. He would, however, be moderate, he says, in the use of the prohibited liquors, and endeavour to follow the other directions of Signor Mercuriale; but at the same time he begs him to take care that the conserve may be pleasant to the taste, as "the excellency of physicians consists in giving medicine not only salutary but agreeable."

The year 1584 brought with it new hopes, and he had the satisfaction of finding that the repeated intercessions of his friends were not without their use. The Duke, softened by the applications of so many persons of rank, sent for him one day, and in the presence of several of his courtiers promised shortly to set him free, permitting him in the mean time to attend divine service at various churches, to visit his friends, and be present at the public spectacles, which formed the favourite amusement of the people of Ferrara. This indulgence had the effect of restoring his mind to some degree of tranquillity and vigour, and his thoughts were sufficiently settled to allow of his composing several dialogues and pieces of poetry.

But his hopes again proved fallacious; and, after

a brief enjoyment of occasional freedom from his cell, he once more found himself reduced to comfortless solitude. Whether this was owing to the mere caprice or negligence of Alfonso, or to the actual condition of Tasso, it is not easy to determine; but the irritation and melancholy of the latter were extreme at this cruel change in his prospects, and he poured forth the bitterest lamentations at his hard lot. Circumstances, however, occurred about this time, which drew off his attention for a while from his personal sufferings.

The Gerusalemme had attracted the admiration of the most learned men in Europe, as well as that of ladies and courtiers; and among the scholars who were loudest in its praise were two gentlemen of Capua, Gio. Batista Attendolo and Camillo Pellegrino. Struck with the regularity of the plan, as well as the surpassing beauties of the poem, they everywhere contended that it deserved to be placed before the "Orlando Furioso." Pellegrino, to enforce his arguments the better, composed a Dialogue on the subject, entitled, "Carrafa, ovvero dell' Epica Poesia;" and, as soon as it was finished, he gave the manuscript to Marcantonio, brother of Carrafa, Prince of Stiglione. It was not long before it had been read and copied by numerous

persons, whom the Prince allowed to see it; and Pellegrino, hearing that it was about to be printed maimed and incorrect, resolved to publish it himself: and the celebrated Scipione Ammirato, his friend, advising him to do so, the work was printed at Florence, and immediately excited considerable attention. But, though the learned admirers of Ariosto and Tasso disputed among themselves with great warmth, none appeared willing to take the field openly against Pellegrino, till, to the astonishment of the public, Lionardo Salviati, who had some time before written to our poet a letter of the highest praise, came forward to prove the inferiority of the Gerusalemme, not only to the Orlando Furioso, but to the Orlando of Boiardo, and the Morgante of Pulci. The influence and erudition of Salviati gained him attention with the Florentines, and he persuaded some literary men, who had formed themselves into a society under the name of the "Accademia della Crusca," to join him in the dispute. This association had only been established since the year 1572, but, as the principal members belonged also to the Florentine Academy, devoted to the studies of polite literature, they were well prepared for the enjoyment of such a controversy. Till this occurred, they had

met with no opportunity of distinguishing themselves; but Salviati, by arming himself with the name of the Academy, brought it into notice, and in a few years it became the most celebrated in Italy, its famous vocabulary, published in 1612, confirming the authority it had been gradually acquiring.*

The answer which Salviati, thus supported, published to Pellegrino, was as bitter and injurious a piece of criticism as the world had ever seen: and, not content with the abuse of the Gerusalemme, the writer extended his invectives to the unfortunate poet's father. This answer, and the "Stacciata," which followed soon after, and was even still more violent, produced a great sensation; but, instead of their affecting Tasso's reputation, as had been expected, they raised a host of combatants in his favour, and the more his fame was assailed, the more it increased. The circumstance which principally affected Tasso himself was the uncalled-for abuse of his father; and in his "Apologia," where he successfully argues against the objections of Salviati, he speaks with an affecting earnestness of his parent's genius, and of the honour due to his name as a poet. His defence was followed by

* Tiraboschi.

another attack from the Della Cruscans, still more violent than the former; and this again was succeeded by the Reply of Pellegrino to the arguments against his Dialogue—a work so universally applauded, and so full of excellent remark, that the Academy itself joined in the common praise, and elected him a member of the society. Other combatants also entered the field in defence of Tasso, and the contest was kept up with vigour, till Salviati obtained a place in the Court of Ferrara; when, though he ceased not to attack the Gerusalemme, he changed, in some measure, the style of his language. The affair is altogether a curious one. The reason assigned by the critic himself for the violence of his attack was, that the poet had used some disrespectful observations on Florence; but it is more generally supposed that he was instigated by a wish to please Alfonso, from whose favour he hoped to obtain a lucrative appointment. If the latter supposition be correct, it serves to throw more light on the real disposition of the Duke towards Tasso than almost any other circumstance with which we are acquainted: for if Salviati had reason to believe that so mean a procedure as attacking the unfortunate poet's reputation would recommend him to his patron, the character of the Prince must

have been even more contemptible than has been represented.

While this controversy was occupying the scholars of Florence and Ferrara, Tasso's thoughts were fluctuating between hope and despair. Finding the intercessions of his friends unavailing with the Duke, he conceived the idea of interesting the city of Bergamo in his favour, and wrote a letter to the magistrates, begging their interference in his behalf. His application met with the most favourable attention. The magistrates of the city decreed, in full council, that Licino, who had edited the "Apologia," should be deputed to the Duke to desire the liberation of Tasso in their name. To strengthen the cause, they sent Alfonso an ancient stone, which bore an inscription highly interesting to the Princes of Este, as serving to establish the true orthography of their name. The Duke received both the messenger and the present with many marks of pleasure, and promised to fulfil the wishes of the people of Bergamo. It appears, however, that he had no immediate intention of keeping his promise, as the poor prisoner was still kept in close confinement at the Hospital.

The marriage of Don Cæsare d'Este with Virginia de' Medici, which was celebrated during the

Carnival of 1586, brought several personages to Ferrara, in the efficacy of whose influence Tasso allowed himself to place much confidence. Don Cæsare, his consort, and the Duchess Margaret were among the foremost to entreat for his liberation; but Don Cæsare being suddenly called to Rome, his expectations were again thwarted. It is easy to imagine what an effect these continual alternations of hope and despair must have had on the weakened frame and irritable mind of the more than ever unfortunate Tasso. Terrified at one time with the gloom of his solitude, and at another provoked by the insolence of his keepers, and the neglect with which he was treated by the Duke—now suffering all the anxiety of an ill-treated author, then agitated with sudden intelligence of fame and success—conversing during the day with the great men, who expressed their highest veneration for the powers of his intellect, and left in the full glow of thought as soon as night began to fall, to be locked up, a maniac among maniacs, —what a fearfully mingled stream of ideas must have passed through the mind of this noble, broken-hearted being! The wonder is not that his reason sometimes wandered, but that it was not wholly lost: and if we consider for a moment the

terrible trial he had to endure, disposed as he constitutionally was to melancholy, we shall see greater cause than ever to admire the original strength of his intellect, all the powers of which were, no doubt, instinctively and constantly combating with the terrors which assailed the very life and being of his spirit.

He had been now for seven years a captive, and, during the best part of the time, had been confined in a small and unhealthy cell. Though latterly removed to a somewhat less loathsome chamber, and allowed, for a brief period, to enjoy the free air of the country, he was still treated with rigorous austerity, and the hope that solaced him one day only served to deepen the despair of the next. Thus oppressed, his mind grew more and more willing to indulge in the reveries of a disordered fancy; his thoughts became visions; the terror of solitude, long suffered, was changed into a belief that the air was rife with beings of another world; all was confusion in his mind—splendid dreams—a resentful sense of injury—a consciousness of power that scarce another human being possessed — and a knowledge forced upon him, at the same time, that not another could be found more dependant, more afflicted, or bowed

nearer to the earth—with all these contradictory emotions in his soul, it is little to be wondered at that he every day became less capable of distinguishing between the suggestions of imagination and the real objects of sense, feverishly strong and active as was the former, and little as there was in the things around him to awaken any interest or keep alive any natural sympathy—the only principle in our being that can prevent the imagination from gaining dominion over the reason.

Tasso yielded himself a willing victim to his disordered fancy, and about the period at which we are arrived began to believe that he was haunted night and day by a malicious spirit, whose sole occupation it was to annoy him. We are fortunately able to give his own account of this strange matter, as he did not neglect to mention the new source of affliction to his friend Cataneo, to whom he thus writes: —"I have received two letters from you, but one of them vanished as soon as I had read it, and I believe the goblin has stolen it, as it is the one in which he is spoken of, and this is another of those wonders which I have often seen in this hospital. I am sure they are effected by some magician, as I could prove by many arguments, but particularly from the circumstance of a loaf having been visibly

taken from me, while my eyes were wide open, and from a plate of fruit having been taken away in a similar manner the other day, when the amiable young Polacco came to visit me. I have been also served thus with other viands when no one has entered the prison, and with letters and books which were locked up in cases, but which I have found scattered about the floor in the morning, and others I have never found."

Nor was this the only torment he experienced from the feverish state of his imagination. "Besides the miracles of the goblin I suffer many nocturnal terrors; I have thought I saw flames in the air, and sometimes my eyes have sparkled to such a degree that I feared I should lose my sight, and sparks have visibly flown from me. I have also seen amid the spars of the bed shadows of rats which could not naturally be in that place; I have heard fearful noises, and have felt a whistling in my ears, and a jingling of bells and tolling of clocks for an hour together. And I have thought in my sleep that I was on horseback, and ready to fall and suffer some grievous hurt. I have had pains of the head, but not excessive; of the intestines, the side, and the legs and thighs, but not great; I am greatly weakened by vomits, a flux of

the blood, and fevers; but amid so many terrors, and such great afflictions there appeared to me in the air an image of the glorious Virgin with her Son in her arms, in the midst of a circle of colours and vapours; wherefore, I ought not to despair of her grace. And although it is possible that this was a mere fantasm, as I am phrenetic, and am almost continually disturbed by various fantasies, and am filled with an infinite melancholy; nevertheless, I am able, by the grace of God, to limit my assent, which, according to Cicero, is the work of a wise man; I ought rather to believe, therefore, that this was a miracle of the Virgin."

In writing to Eneas Tasso, he says, "The devil, with whom I have slept and passed my time, not being able to find that peace with me which he desired, has become a regular robber, and, coming behind me when I am asleep, opens the closets which I am unable to keep a watch over; but as he has robbed me thus cunningly, I shall not trust to his not pilfering me again, and therefore I transmit to your Excellency the money given me by the Princes of Molfetta and Mantua, and by Signor Paulo Grillo and the Marquis of Este, making in all twenty-four scudi of gold, ten zecchini, and forty ducats di piastre. I beg you to

acknowledge the receipt of this, and to use your exertions that I may escape from the hand of the devil with my books and writings, which are not more secure than my money."

His friends, however, both at Rome and elsewhere, were unremitting in their exertions to obtain his release. Even the Pope took an interest in his cause, and Don Cæsare d' Este wrote to inform him that he trusted his liberation was near at hand. But it was necessary that the business should be conducted with the greatest caution; Alfonso's jealous disposition was universally known,* and it was feared that if too much haste or anxiety was evinced, he might still resist the efforts of Tasso's advocates. Don Cæsare, therefore, provided himself with the interest and entreaties of the Pontiff, and numerous other distinguished personages, to support his own measures, and, thus encouraged, immediately on his return to Ferrara he pressed the subject upon the Duke with so much force and earnestness, that he was at length obliged to assent, and promised to liberate his prisoner on the Duke of Mantua's becoming surety that he should suffer nothing from the violence of the poet's pen, and promising to take the unfortunate man into his

* Serassi.

own court and keep him there, so that he might have nothing to fear from his resentment. But these kind exertions of Tasso's friends were on the point of proving useless. A violent fever, with which he was at this time attacked, brought him to the verge of the grave, and he attributed his recovery solely to the miraculous support of the Virgin, who, in answer to his supplications, appeared to and comforted him. No sooner, however, was he in some degree recovered from this illness than he received the joyful tidings that Alfonso had consented to his liberation. To render this the more certain, the Duke of Mantua, urged by the persuasions of the Duchess, as well as his own regard for the poet, came to Ferrara himself, and received from Alfonso's mouth the promise which had been made to Don Cæsare, and to the conditions of which he willingly subscribed. This agreement between the two Princes is stated to have taken place in the latter part of June 1586, and it was no sooner settled than Costantino ran to St. Anna, eager to let his unfortunate friend know how certainly he might now look for liberty; but fearing that too sudden possession of the happiness in store for him might have an injurious effect on his debilitated frame, he informed him that in four or

five days he might expect to leave the hospital. This assurance was repeated by the Duke of Mantua himself, who visited him on the evening of the 3rd of July, and, before he left him, requested that he would write some verses for him on a subject which he named. Poor Tasso did not sleep a moment the whole night, so anxious was he to fulfill the Duke's desire, and the next morning he sent his little poem, "On a Lady armed," accompanied by a letter, in which he entreats the Prince to take him with him on his return to Mantua.

The long looked-for day at last arrived, and on the 5th or 6th of July, Costantino accompanied one of Alfonso's courtiers to St. Anna with an order to the Prior to set Tasso at liberty. It is easy to imagine but impossible to describe the sensations of delight with which the poet must have stepped over the threshold of his prison into the free air. Seven years, two months, and some days had been passed there, and if it be only remembered how many horrors, both from within and without, were crowded into one of his days or nights, what an age of mental and bodily suffering shall we see comprehended in that period!

The few days which intervened between his

liberation and his departure for Mantua were spent at the house of the Ambassador Albizzi, nor did he feel any desire to show himself to the good people of Ferrara, whom he had to thank for so little hospitality. He did not even trouble himself to collect his books or papers; so entirely did he occupy himself with the simple enjoyment of his newly acquired felicity, or so completely was he worn out with his sufferings of late, that he had become indifferent to all objects of minor importance. The only circumstance, it is singular to find, at which he felt regret on leaving Ferrara was his not being admitted to take farewell of Alfonso, a circumstance as honourable to his affectionate and grateful heart, as it was disgraceful to the character of the Prince.

At Mantua, Tasso was treated by the Duke and his consort with every mark of esteem and respect. He was furnished with clothes of the richest description, was attended by the Duke's own servants, drank the most piquant and finest-flavoured wines, enjoyed the favour of the courtiers and nobles, and was altogether so happy that he felt for some time no inclination to change his place of residence. But his health and spirits were still in a state of deplorable exhaustion; and, in a letter to one of his friends he says, "I am still afflicted

with the grievous infirmity I brought with me to Mantua, and to which liberty alone affords any relief. But the greatest of all ills is the phrenetic disorder, for I am continually disturbed with many distressing thoughts, and many imaginations, and many fantasies; and to this phrenzy is added a great weakness of memory." How affectingly in the same letter does he indicate the sufferings he had undergone from the ruin of his health: "If all the blessings of existence were taken and piled up in a heap, they would not altogether be equal in value to established health."

But he now resumed his literary labours; revised some of his dialogues; wrote his "Lettera Politica;" finished his father's poem of "Floridante," and also his own tragedy of "Torrismondo," of which Costantino made an excellent copy, in order that it might be presented to the Princess for her perusal. With all the advantages, however, which he enjoyed, it was not long before he began to feel discontented at not possessing that perfect liberty to which he had a right in common with all human beings, but which had been, in fact, abridged by the stipulations of Alfonso. This source, however, of discontent was in some measure removed on the Duke's going into Germany, when he gave Tasso

permission to visit Bergamo for some months. His reception there was not less marked by the kindness and hospitable attention of his friends than it had been when he visited that place in the heyday of his youth; and to the regard with which his older associates met him, was added the profound respect in which he was held by the numerous learned men assembled in the town. Nothing, however, could divert his mind from the idea he had conceived that he should be able to enjoy more liberty at Rome than at Mantua, and the great object of his present wishes was to obtain the Duke's permission to leave his Court. Cataneo and most of his other friends used their utmost efforts to dissuade him from this intention, but all to no purpose, and in the midst of the struggle between the poet and his advisers, the Duke died, and Tasso found new and more powerful reasons for leaving Mantua. The Prince Vincenzo, who succeeded to the dukedom, was one of his warmest friends, and he had just dedicated to him his tragedy of Torrismondo, the printing of which was commenced during his stay at Bergamo. But the young Duke was either too much occupied with the cares of his new dignity to pay him sufficient attention, or he had intimated some idea of employing

him as his secretary,* either of which was sufficient to hasten Tasso's departure;—the former would hurt the keen susceptibility of his spirit as a gentleman, the latter terrify him with the apprehension of being drawn from his studies. In a letter to Cataneo on the subject, he says, that "he had no wish to undertake the service of the Prince since he was excluded from his friendship; that he knew what became the grandeur of a sovereign and the modesty of a man of letters; that he would rather be named among the humblest than place himself among the highest, but that after seven years' imprisonment, nine of illness, thirty-two of exile, a thousand distresses and afflictions, and the misery of seeing his works lacerated, he would refuse, if possible, every kind of occupation, except that of correcting, enlarging, and beautifying them." He also wrote to the Abate Grillo in the same manner, and before he knew what would be the decision of the Prince respecting him. "Princes," says he, "can confer reputation better than most other persons, but no reputation can please me which is separate from that gained by study and literature."

Having obtained the Duke's permission to retire

* Manso.

from his service, he resolved upon proceeding to Rome, and from thence to Naples and Sorrento. The means of performing this journey were afforded him by his friends, the Prince, who was greatly displeased at his departure, having refused to grant him any supplies. He set out from Mantua on the 19th of October 1587, carrying with him only a little trunk with his clothes, and a box with his writings and a few books which he thought he might want. He reached Bologna on the 25th, and remained there till the 27th, when he set out for Loretto, where he performed his vows. The little money, however, with which he had left Mantua, was now completely exhausted, and he was in danger of falling into the same distress as in his flight from Ferrara, but happily for him Don Ferranti Gonzaga arrived at Loretto in time to hear of his situation, and finding who he was, he liberally supplied him with the means of continuing his journey. Numerous persons in the neighbourhood, also, on discovering that it was Tasso who had thus arrived, a humble and moneyless pilgrim at the shrine, ran to offer him assistance. Having, therefore, finished his devotions, and obtained a good horse, he resumed his journey, and reached Rome on the 4th of November.

The hopes he had conceived of receiving some provision from the Pontiff, and of enjoying that quiet and leisure for pursuing his studies which he so much desired, were speedily dissipated. His friends neglected to use their influence in his favour, and he was even threatened with some new attempt upon his liberty, Alfonso having intimated to the Duke of Mantua that he had broken the agreement on which he had consented to liberate Tasso from St. Anna.

Seeing no prospect, therefore, of bettering his condition by prolonging his stay at Rome, the disappointed poet resolved upon proceeding to Naples without farther delay, and of employing all the interest he could procure to obtain the restoration of some part of his mother's dowry, or of the estate which had been confiscated on account of his father's attachment to Sanseverino. The necessary permission for his visiting Naples having been obtained from the Imperial Court, he set out for that city towards the end of March 1588, and few days of his life were happier than those which he spent in visiting its magnificent and classic scenes; the very breathing of its pure mild air was a delight and refreshment to him, and in the monastery of Mount Olivet, where he took

up his abode, he found the most efficacious remedy for his melancholy that he had discovered since his residence with his sister — repose, the occasional society of literary friends, meditation amid scenes that were too beautiful to seem solitary, and the continual discovery of new objects to give play to fancy, or awaken a host of lofty and animating recollections, — these afforded him means for struggling with the infirmities of both mind and body, and if they did not effect a permanent cure, they relieved him for a time from suffering, and threw a gleam of light across his path, which, however transient, was incalculably precious to one who had been so long struggling with darkness.

The time he passed at the monastery of Mount Olivet was not idly spent. Besides undertaking some alterations in his Gerusalemme, he wrote a poem on the origin of the religious establishment in which he enjoyed so comfortable a retreat. Having finished the first book of this poem, he sent it to his friend, the well-known Marchese della Villa, Giambatista Manso, his earliest and eloquent biographer, for perusal.

Tasso, notwithstanding all his misfortunes, had as many friends as most men, and the Marchese

della Villa was one of the warmest. Contented with rambling about the hills and woods, amid which the monastery was embosomed, the poet resisted as long as he could all the invitations of his acquaintances to visit their houses. But Manso, a man of elegant mind, and whose perception of Tasso's feelings was as quick as his desire to soothe them, won his confidence, and rendered his society agreeable to him by that unobtrusive but warm friendship, which is especially acceptable to a mind so desirous of sympathy, yet so irritable and suspicious as that of Tasso. Having thus gained the confidence of the poet, Manso at length succeeded in persuading him to accompany him to his estate at Bisaccio. Besides the beautiful situation of the villa, Tasso there enjoyed the society of numerous persons distinguished for their talents, while to the graver pleasures of literary conversation were added the lighter ones of gay and splendid assemblies, in which the Marquis sought to dissipate the melancholy of his venerated guest by light and festive music, and the songs of improvisatori, whose facility of versifying he is reported to have said he envied, nature having denied him the command of such fluency. But his mind was still under the dominion of the strange illusions which

had begun to affect it before he left the hospital of St. Anna. A change, however, it is worthy of remark, had in some degree taken place in the character of his supernatural visitants. While in the hospital, and agitated night and day by the apprehension of secret enemies, he was haunted by a demon whose chief attribute was a malicious cunning. Now that he was restored to freedom, and had been able to seek repose, and pass his time in meditating amid the grand and soothing scenes of nature, his intercourse was with a loftier spirit—with one that seemed to meet his thoughts midway to Heaven, and to be sent to make his meditations more solemn and sublime. Manso, in a letter to the Prince of Conca, written while Tasso was staying at Bisaccio, gives a full account of the circumstances respecting the poet's supernatural visitant, having received the particulars from his own mouth as they used to sit conversing together before the fire. The writer observes that he had used all the arguments in his power to convince him that his visions were the effect of a disordered imagination, showing the improbability of their reality from the consideration that he had no reason to fear that demons would be permitted to torment him, and that it would be presumptuous to suppose that an angel

would be visibly sent for his consolation. To these arguments Tasso replied, that the uniform character of the vision with which he had now for some time past been haunted, disproved the idea of its not being real, imagination working more capriciously and wildly. He remarked also, that the mind had not the power of reasoning distinctly while deluded by fancy, whereas he had held many and long and continued conversations with the spirit which attended him, and had heard from it things which neither he nor any other man had ever before heard or read, or known. "To which remark," observes Manso, "I still continued to object, till one day in the heat of our argument, he said, 'Since I cannot convince you by reason, I will undeceive you by experience, and will make you see with your own eyes the spirit which you will not believe in from my words.' I accepted the proposal, and the following day, while we were sitting alone by the fire, he turned his face towards the window, on which he fixed his eyes, and when I spoke to him, he made no answer. At last, he said, 'See! the friendly spirit has courteously come to speak to me; attend, and you will perceive the truth of my words.' I instantly turned my eyes in the direction to which he pointed, but

though I looked intently, could perceive nothing except the rays of the sun, which entered the room through the window. While, however, I was looking, I heard Torquato commence a most sublime conversation with something or other, for though I neither saw nor heard any one but himself, his words, as he propounded and replied, were like those used by a person in earnest debate. From what he said, I could easily comprehend what the replies were which he received, though they were unheard by the ear. And these reasonings were so grand and marvellous from the sublimity of the things they contained, and from a certain something not common in discourse, that I was almost stupified with wonder, and dare neither interrupt Tasso, nor make any inquiries respecting the spirit with which he had made me acquainted, but which I saw not. I, therefore, continued to listen, full of wonder and delight, and unheeded by Tasso, till, as I understood from his words, the spirit was leaving him, when he turned to me, and said, 'All doubts will now be for ever banished from your mind.' To which I answered, they are but increased; for I have heard many things worthy of marvel, but have seen nothing that you promised to show me to dissipate my incredulity.

He replied, 'You have, perhaps, seen and heard much more than . . . . . .' but there he stopped, and as I did not dare to trouble him with any farther questions, the conversation ended."

Manso returned to Naples in the autumn, and Tasso again took up his residence in the monastery of Mount Olivet. The correction of the Gerusalemme was his principal employment, his law-proceedings having been stopped at their very commencement from the want of documents on which to establish their legality. His only annoyance at present was the importunity of the young Count di Paleno, who was resolutely bent on making the poet his guest, while his father was as resolute in opposing the idea, not being able to endure the thought of his keeping company with the son of the disloyal and exiled Bernardo Tasso. To put an end to the contest between the father and son, the poet generously determined to make a journey to Rome, alleging as a reason, that he was anxious about some books and writings he had ordered to be sent thither from Bergamo and Mantua.

He arrived at Rome, December 9th, 1588, and proceeded to the palace of the Cardinal Scipione Gonzaga, but imagining that the reception given him was not sufficiently warm, he wrote to Niccolò

degli Oddi, superior of the monastery of Santa Maria Nuova, who immediately sent his carriage for him, and provided him apartments in his establishment. He remained there near four months, suffering from a fever almost all the time, after recovering from which, he returned to the palace of the Cardinal, and engaged in his literary labours with renewed diligence. He formed the idea of publishing a uniform edition of his works, and as a commencement collected his miscellaneous pieces, which formed three volumes, and accompanied them with a commentary. His dialogue, entitled "Il Costantino, ovvero della Clemenza," was written at the same period, and was considered by him as one of the very best he had composed.

But he was still the victim of those annoyances which he had suffered through life from the low dependants of his princely protectors; and in the Court of the Cardinal, he was exposed to full as many insults as in that of Alfonso. The bad condition of his revenues also may be easily understood from the application which he made to his friend Costantini, now in the service of the Duke of Mantua, begging him to use his influence with that Prince in his favour, as he was miserably off for a court-dress, for a coat, a night-gown, and

even for shirts. The Duke gave an order that his wants might be supplied; but the answer was intercepted by a creature of the Cardinal's, who not only insulted Tasso by every means in his power, but at length expelled him the palace. In this situation he would have perished with cold and hunger, but for the timely aid he received from the Count di Paleno and other friends at Naples. Still the accommodation he could find at inns and lodging-houses was little adapted to his weak state of health, and the Abate degli Oddi received him again into his convent. But he appears not to have been free from the suspicion that even among the good fathers of Santa Maria hospitality was not free from capriciousness; and in writing to Papio, he begged him to make a copy of one of his works for him, that he might be able to obtain the means of going elsewhere, as monks were as likely to take offence at him as cardinals. These anticipations were speedily realized, and Tasso, oppressed with sickness, and destitute of both money and friends, was obliged to seek a shelter in an hospital.

It is supposed by Serassi, that he voluntarily retired to the Spedale de' Bergamaschi, in order to establish his health by proper medical treatment, and that it was not altogether necessity which drove him thither. He also considers that this

opinion receives confirmation from the circumstance that the principal founder of the hospital was the cousin of Torquato's father. But even allowing that these considerations might in some measure diminish the humiliating feelings of the unfortunate poet, "How great was the disgrace," Serassi properly exclaims, "incurred by the nobles of that age in thus suffering the greatest man that Italy had produced for centuries, to fall into the condition of a mendicant, and be reduced to find shelter in an hospital!" The same idea is expressed still more strongly in a Latin satire attributed to Niccolò Villani of Pistoia. "Alas! alas!" exclaims the author, "he had not wherewith to find food or clothing, but, miserable himself, sat with the poor and sick and outcast, in a common hospital, sordid in his apparel, destitute of money, and only one step removed from having to beg alms at the gate."

Heu heu
Non erat, unde sibi, vestemve, cibumve pararet;
At miser hospitiis communibus inter egenos,
Inter et ægrotos, interque sedebat euntes,
Sordidus in pannis, atque unius indigus assis;
Et tantum sacras non mendicabat ad ædes.

Tasso seems by this time to have well nigh exhausted the bitter cup of which he had drunk

through life, and the remainder of his career wears a far less severe and gloomy aspect. His health being somewhat improved by his treatment at the hospital, he once more returned to the monastery of Santa Maria, and soon after received an intimation that the Duke of Mantua was desirous of his presence at Court, which was followed by a still more flattering invitation from the Grand-duke of Tuscany, who pressed him to visit Florence with many expressions of esteem and admiration. He was, however, obliged by the bad state of his health to decline both these proposals to resume the life of a courtier, till the Grand-duke, directing his Ambassador at Rome to visit him, and assure him that every means should be employed to make his journey to Florence as little fatiguing as possible, following up this message by the gift of a hundred scudi, so wrought upon the poet's gratitude that he could no longer reject the invitation, and on the 5th of April, 1590, he commenced his journey into Tuscany.

Not only the Duke, but all the inhabitants of Florence sought to express their respect for Tasso on his arrival in their city: "People invited their friends," says one of his eulogists, "to come and see him as an object of wonder; while as he passed

along the streets those who met him exclaimed, 'See! that is Tasso!'—an exclamation which might be well prompted by the unusually tall and majestic figure of the poet—by his pale and thoughtful countenance, and the somewhat wild expression of his blue, lustrous eyes. His purse, moreover, was replenished by the various gifts of the Grand-duke, and by one of a hundred scudi from the Marquis del Ventimiglia, who wished him to make mention of some of his ancestors in his new poem, the 'Gerusalemme Conquistata.'"

At the beginning of September he returned to Rome, but found himself so unwell at his arrival, that he was obliged immediately to seek his bed. He lost no time in informing his friend Costantini of his situation; but there seems to have been some mention of the manner in which he spent his money in the answer to this letter, as we shortly after find him expatiating on his economy: "I have scarcely bought two melons," says he, "this whole summer, and, weak as I am, I have eaten meat instead of spending my money for poultry; and when I have had a salad, or such like, it has been for a luxury. If, however, to spend money in physic be to throw it away, I confess I have wasted some scudi. I will not allow that what little I have

spent in books has been wasted, for I stood in great need of them, either to learn something new, or recall what I had before read."

During Tasso's visit to Florence, the Cardinal di Cremona, Niccoli Sfondrato, had ascended the Pontifical throne, and assumed the name of Gregory XIV. The poet, after using great exertion, obtained an introduction to his Holiness, in the hope that he should reap advantage from his liberality; but owing to some circumstance or other, most probably the coldness of his friends, and the want of good feeling in the Pontiff, he was left totally unnoticed. He felt this neglect so deeply that he resolved upon at once bidding adieu to the world, and immuring himself in the monastery of Santa Maria del Popolo. The letter in which he mentions this resolution to Costantini, is dated February 7, 1591, and his friend answered it so promptly and with so much force, that on the 20th of the same month, instead of being in a cell, he was on his way to Mantua.

Sickness, as usual, was his companion, during the best part of his stay in that city; but his thoughts were busily engaged on the proposed edition of his works, and the principal printers, both of Mantua and Venice, were eager to under-

take the publication. The miscellaneous poems, however, were the only part of his productions prepared for press, and the printing of these, which had been commenced some time since, proceeded too slowly for his satisfaction.

About the middle of November he set out on his return to Rome, which he reached, much reduced in strength, the following month. His old friend Maurizio Cataneo invited him, on this occasion, to his house, and shortly after he had his hopes again excited by the accession of a new Pontiff. According to Serassi, he had a notion that he should be promoted to some valuable office in the Church, and from that idea made a scrupulous review of his works, which he divested of every thing that might appear offensive to his ecclesiastical superiors. But while the election of the Pontiff was pending, he received an invitation from the Count di Paleno, who by the death of his father was left free from any hindrance to the enjoyment of Tasso's company. The letter, however, which contained the invitation, provided no money for the journey, and the poet, not having the means of defraying its expenses himself, was obliged to intimate this circumstance to the Count, who lost no time in remitting him a sum sufficient for the

purpose. In January 1592, we again find him, therefore, in Naples, enjoying the attention of the Prince and his other friends, and pursuing the composition of the Gerusalemme Conquistata, which he was on the eve of completing. This circumstance did not a little enhance the pride and gratification which the Prince of Conca experienced at having Tasso for his guest; but his anxiety to see the poem finished in his house defeated his purpose, for Tasso having discovered that he had ordered his servants to keep a watch over the work lest it should be removed from the palace, felt himself exposed to a species of observation by no means agreeable. One day, therefore, when the Prince was out, his friend Manso, taking the poet by one hand and his work in the other, conveyed them both to his own residence, a procedure which the Prince of Conca saw it right to excuse with great kindness and good-humour.

At Manso's villa, situated on the sea coast, and skirted by the most beautiful gardens and plantations, Tasso's health and spirits were considerably improved; and besides continuing the Gerusalemme Conquistata, he wrote, at the instigation of Manso's mother, an amiable and pious woman, the "Sette Giornate del Mondo Creato." His law

suits were, in the mean time, in progress, though retarded by the cavils of his opponents, who, among other arguments to oppose his claims, objected that he was prevented from inheriting by the madness with which he had been afflicted; "to which," says Manso, "it might have been answered, as in the case of Sophocles,—do these verses appear like the work of a madman?"

Finding, however, that it must necessarily be a considerable time before the affair could be brought to a conclusion, Tasso determined upon returning to Rome, where he had now a better prospect than ever of finding patronage. In his journey he saw his friends Pellegrino and Attendolo, at Capua, but was prevented from spending any time with them by the haste with which his companion and escort, Procaccio, pressed him forward: but at Mola da Gaeta, their progress was stopped by the report that the famous bandit, Marco di Sciarra, was in the neighbourhood, with a powerful troop of his followers. Tasso's impatience could ill brook such an interruption to his journey; and, in a letter which he wrote to Feltro, while still at Mola, he says, that he greatly wished to go forth and employ the sword he had given him, but was prohibited from stirring by the Commissaries till

the country should be quiet. How long he might have had to endure this species of imprisonment it was impossible to tell, but just as his stock of patience was exhausted, he received, to his astonishment, a message from the robber himself, which intimated that not only was the road open to him, but that Marco di Sciarra was ready to provide him both protection and every accommodation to render his journey safe and agreeable. Tasso could not but return his grateful acknowledgments for the honour thus paid his name; but, fearing he might injure himself with the Commissaries if he accepted the proposal, he rejected the bandit's offer. Marco, however, fully resolved upon manifesting his regard for the poet, immediately sent word, that to serve Tasso, he would withdraw his band altogether from the neighbourhood*—a testimony to the power of our author's genius and the extent of his fame, of precisely the same nature with that which Ariosto received at Garfagnana.

On his arrival at Rome, Tasso had the gratification to find that some of his friends had not been idle in employing their interest for him with the new Pope; and, instead of having to seek refuge either in a monastery or an hospital, he was re-

* Manso.

ceived into the house of the Pontiff's nephews, "Not," says Serassi, "to serve, or play the courtier, an office which he would have refused under any circumstances whatever, but to compose poetry and philosophize."

The names of his new masters, if so they may be styled, were Cintio and Pietro Aldobrandini, and their natural good taste and love of study rendered them duly sensible of the advantage they enjoyed in the company of a man like Tasso. Cintio, the elder, was unwearied in showing him marks of affection; and the poet, to prove a proportionable degree of gratitude, resolved upon inscribing to him the Gerusalemme Conquistata, now on the point of being finished. Not only Cintio, but the Pontiff himself was highly delighted at the idea of the honour which their family would derive from the dedication of such a work to one of its members; and Cintio, that nothing might occur to rob him of the honour, immediately employed Angelo Ingegnero, the Venetian, to assist in preparing the poem for the press.

Tasso, in the mean time, had been provided with apartments in the Vatican, and also accompanied the Court when the Pope retired to Montecavallo, where he spent several months in the year. So

well, in fact, was the poet contented with his situation at this period, that he expressed no wish to return to his favourite Naples. The completion of his new epic contributed still farther to increase his good humour, and he said of this poem that he felt for it the greatest affection; that he was alienated from the former one, as a father from a rebellious child, of which he suspects the legitimacy; that this was born of his mind, as Minerva from the head of Jove; and that he would entrust it with his life, and even his soul. It was published in the latter part of 1593, and enjoyed for some time a prodigious popularity; but, after the first excitement of novelty had passed away, it was discovered that its superior regularity and dignity of language were not sufficient to make up for its inferiority to the Gerusalemme Liberata in variety, and splendour of invention. The comparison which the author himself drew between his two epics, both in the dedication of the Conquistata, and in a Treatise written expressly on the subject, is highly curious, and affords another instance of the fact, that the mind is far from being always capable of judging correctly respecting the relative merit of its own productions.

Having finished the Conquistata, Tasso com-

posed several small pieces, of a devotional kind, which were read with such avidity, that in a few days they were printed in five different cities. He also continued, though but slowly, his poem on the Creation; and, in the early part of 1594, had completed two of the Giornate, and prepared the materials for the other five. His situation, in the mean time, continued as agreeable to him as at first: Cintio, who was now a Cardinal, treated him with the respect and regard he merited, and almost all the great men of Rome, whether ecclesiastics or not, sought his acquaintance. How strange was this! Tasso had written all his noblest works, when, a very few years before, he had been suffered to wander about Rome without a friend, and to seek a few quiet days, and a little nursing in an hospital! But he had then no Prince or Cardinal to protect him:—so little is genius, of the highest order, sure of respect for its own intrinsic dignity.

It is gratifying to find that Tasso, notwithstanding all he had suffered, retained the urbanity of his nature uninjured. When over-fatigued with study, or labouring under indisposition, he was accustomed to recreate himself by visiting different quarters of the city, and was a frequent attendant in the schools of philosophy. On these occasions,

he would wait to the conclusion of the lecture, and then, collecting round him a number of the young students, spend a considerable time in conversing with, and questioning, them on various topics of interest.

But in March 1594 the decline of his constitution became alarmingly perceptible, and he obtained permission of his protectors to make a journey to Naples, where he hoped the fineness of the climate might have some influence on his health. He arrived at Naples on the 3rd of June, and took up his abode in the monastery of St. Severino. Manso hastened to him the moment he heard of his arrival, and their meeting was attended with every demonstration of the most ardent and unchanging friendship. The genuine kindness of the Marquis was evinced in a singular but affectionate manner. One of the first inquiries he made of Tasso was respecting the state of his wardrobe in regard to linen, and, finding that his supply was small, he immediately set his mother and wife, with their domestics, to work, and, in a few days, sent the poet an immense stock of every thing necessary for his use. The poet certainly committed no mistake when he dedicated his Dialogue on Friendship to Manso.

Though his health was not materially improved, Tasso was so far relieved by the repose and change of air consequent on his journey, that he was able to enjoy the society of his friends, and of the various literary men who came to see him at the monastery, or invited him to their houses. But four months being already passed, the Cardinal Cintio grew impatient of his absence, and wrote to request his immediate return. Tasso replied that his lawsuit was still but in an early stage of its progress, and that he was, moreover, engaged with printing his Discourse on Heroic Poetry, and the Dialogo delle Imprese. Cintio, not content with this apology, and desirous of conferring upon his friend the highest honour in his power to bestow, proposed to the Pope and his brother Cardinals to award to Tasso a public triumph and coronation. His proposal was immediately assented to, and he wrote to the poet again, summoning him to return without delay, and informing him of the honour that awaited him.

Tasso, it is said, expressed neither surprise nor joy at this flattering intelligence, and it would, I conceive, have been surprising if he had. He was, in the first place, too well assured of the universality and stability of his fame to desire such

an exhibition; and he was too much of a philosopher not to dislike a ceremony which was likely to degenerate into a vulgar show. He, however, informed the Cardinal that he would return to Rome by November. He fulfilled his promise, and on arriving near the city, he was met by a great number of the Pope's servants and several courtiers, who conducted him with great ceremony to the palace. On the following morning he had an audience of the Pope, who spoke to him respecting his triumph and coronation, which the young Cardinal wished to take place immediately, but afterwards considered that it would be better to defer the ceremony till the fine days of spring. Tasso, however, listened to all that was said unmoved, answering his friends who congratulated him, in the words of Seneca, "Magnifica verba mors prope admota excutit"—Approaching death despises proud designs. His health, indeed, grew every day worse, and his mind was wholly occupied in completing the sacred poem of Genesis, to effect which Ingegneri afforded him considerable assistance, both revising what was already written, and eagerly copying what Tasso dictated from time to time, or wrote on different slips of paper.

It affords us a melancholy pleasure to find that

every step poor Tasso set towards the goal of his weary journey, his path became less thorny and rugged. At the beginning of 1595, the Pope conferred upon him an annual pension of two hundred scudi; and he had the satisfaction to hear about the same time that his opponent in the suits instituted at Naples had agreed to a compromise, and offered to settle on him an annuity of two hundred ducats. But in the month of April, and when his friends were preparing for his coronation, his spirits suddenly drooped, and he anticipated the speedy approach of death. In order that he might pass the last hours of his life in quiet and devotion, he requested permission to retire to the convent of Saint Onofrio, to which desire the Cardinal gave a melancholy assent, and had his carriage prepared to convey him to the monastery without delay. The morning on which he set out was dark and stormy, a heavy rain falling incessantly, accompanied with violent blasts of wind; the monks were, therefore, somewhat astonished when they saw the Cardinal's carriage approach, and went out to meet the unexpected visitor. Tasso descended the vehicle with difficulty, and answering the salute of the Prior and his brothers, said he was come to die among them. On the 10th

of the month his disorder, increased, it is said, by his having taken some milk, of which he was particularly fond, left no longer any hope of his recovery. A fever then seized him, which arrived at its height on the seventh day, and Rinaldini, the Pope's physician, warned him that his last hour was at hand. Prepared for this intelligence, Tasso embraced him, thanked him with cheerfulness for his warning, and then raising his eyes towards Heaven, fervently praised God for having after a long and tempestuous voyage, carried him into port. "From this hour," says Manso—whose grave and pathetic account of the poet's death is worthy of one who was the friend of Milton—"From this hour he spoke no more of earthly things, nor of fame after death, but wholly intent on celestial glory, thought of nothing but how he might best prepare himself for that great and sublime flight he hoped to take; to which end he began to elevate his thoughts, supporting himself, as it were, on two most swift and powerful wings, one of which was distrust in himself, the other trust in God."

Notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he resolved upon taking the sacrament the following morning in the church pertaining to the monas-

tery, and amid the brethren of the establishment. Supported in the arms of his attendants, he went through the sacred rites with the devotion to be expected from a dying man, and such a man as Tasso. When he was replaced in his bed, the Prior put some questions to him respecting his will, and where he wished to be buried; to which he made answer that he had so little property, it was scarcely worth considering what became of it after his death; but turning to his confessor, he said smilingly, "Father, write down that I render back my soul to God who gave it, and my body to the earth, whence it is derived, in this church of Saint Onofrio; that I make Cardinal Cintio the heir to my goods, and request that he will restore to Signor Giambatista Manso that little picture of me, which he has been unwilling to give away except in the present case; and that to this monastery I give this image of my most beloved Redeemer," saying which, he took a crucifix from the head of the bed, which had been given him by Clement VII., and was not only of singularly beautiful workmanship, but had been specially blessed by the Pontiff.

He continued to linger on from this time to the 24th day of the month, and the fourteenth from

that of his attack, employing all that period in devotion and in conversing with his confessor, who is reported to have said that he had found no taint of mortal sin in his life for many years previous to his decease. On the day above-mentioned, he was every moment expected to breathe his last, and Cintio being informed of his condition, benevolently hastened to the monastery, carrying with him the benediction and absolution of the Pontiff, which he had solicited for his friend. Tasso received this mark of kindness with devout gratitude, saying, as the absolution was given him, that "it was the car on which he hoped to go crowned not with laurel, as a poet into the capitol, but with glory as a saint into Heaven." On the Cardinal's inquiring if he had no request to make respecting any thing to be done after his death, he replied that he should be happy if all the copies of his works could be collected and given to the flames, since God had not permitted him to finish the Sette Giornate, and the Gerusalemme was especially imperfect. "He knew," he said, "that it would be difficult to gather together all the copies dispersed about, but it would not, he believed, be impossible." The Cardinal, seeing the earnestness with which he made this request, answered him

in a manner which allowed him to think that his desire would be attended to. Tasso expressed no little pleasure at receiving this intimation, and continued to observe that as he had now obtained, through the visit of the Cardinal and the benediction of the Pontiff, all he could desire in this world, he begged to be allowed to spend the short space he had to live in meditation, and to be left till the following morning entirely alone with Christ, who, he observed, taking the crucifix in his hand, could alone mediate for him between his heavy sins and infinite Mercy. This request was immediately complied with, and the Cardinal and the other persons present having left the chamber, they gave way to their grief in copious floods of tears. Tasso remained alone with God as he desired, and the only persons thenceforth permitted to enter the chamber were his confessor and one or two of the fathers, distinguished for their learning and sanctity. As these holy men watched round his bed, they comforted him by the singing of psalms, in which he occasionally joined, and then retiring into himself again held silent communion with his Saviour. In this manner was passed the whole of that solemn night; and the next morning, about eleven o'clock, the holy and immortal Tasso, know-

ing that his hour was come, embraced the crucifix, and with the words on his lips "Into thy hands, O Lord," he resigned his spirit to God.

This event occurred on the 25th of April, and in the evening of the same day the corpse, all that remained among men of the divine poet, was privately interred in the church of the monastery, and covered with a plain marble slab. Manso, on visiting Rome ten years after, was anxious to see a tomb raised over his friend more befitting his fame, but the Cardinal Cintio prevented his proceedings, observing that he intended to erect a monument to Tasso at his own expense. Manso with difficulty, therefore, obtained permission merely to inscribe the poet's name on the marble which covered him, in order that it might be known by the strangers who visited the monastery in what spot his bones were deposited. The Cardinal never found it in his power to raise the memorial he had proposed, and all Tasso's sepulchral honours were comprehended in the simple inscription of his friend, till Cardinal Bevilacqua placed his remains in a prouder receptacle, and framed a loftier sounding, though not so noble an epitaph as the plain "Hic Jacet Torquatus Tassus."

The abundant and valuable materials which lay

before me for a life of Tasso, have tempted me beyond the limits I had proposed for the memoir, and having been unwilling to curtail any important part of the facts, I am obliged to abridge the space materially which I had intended to devote to the examination of those portions of his history which have given rise to controversy. Instead, therefore, of entering into the discussion which relates to his love of the Princess Leonora, I can only state that my own impression is, that if he loved her it was not with a passion so ardent and so wild as many persons have supposed, and that I am even sceptical as to his ever having loved any individual woman with extraordinary devotion. The daily food of Tasso's heart was romance, and whatever was lovely, that he loved from the very constitution of his mind and nature. The beautiful Lucretia Bendedei, who attracted his notice on his first going to Ferrara, became the object of his most glowing praise; and it is a difficult theory to believe that a youthful poet, whose soul was ever open to tender affections, should dwell long on the charms of a youthful beauty, and express himself in language that could incline others to love, but be all the time unimpressed with passion, or be only playing a part, allowing

his imagination to run wild in painting the loveliness of one lady, that he might not be suspected of loving another. And, if he had been really captivated with the charms of Lucretia Bendedei, but could forget his passion, and transfer his love to the Princess Leonora, there is little reason to suppose that the second was of a more violent nature than the first, or deeper seated in his heart. The probability, indeed, is, that he loved Leonora: the existence of so many traditional surmises on the subject, goes far to prove the reality of some such mystery; but the probability is equally great that his love had no share in driving him mad, or provoking the Duke to confine him in a madhouse. His simply regarding the Princess with a more fervent respect than other courtiers dared, would have been sufficient to give rise to a thousand suspicions in the world, circumstanced as Tasso was, and a poet. And, if the traditional notion that he loved her may be thus accounted for, there is very little evidence existing to show that his supposed passion had any lasting or important influence over his feelings. His mind continued to be wholly occupied after her death, as before, with his literary pursuits, and endeavours to procure his liberation. In his most unreserved communications to his friends, we meet with none of those confessions

which are so likely to escape the lips of a man suffering from feelings long kept unrevealed; and the same observation holds good, and with much greater force, in respect to his letters and conversation, when the object of his passion no longer lived, when he was himself far from Ferrara, and when he had no reason to fear that the courtiers of Alfonso were at the door of his chamber, waiting to report his words. The consideration even of his conduct towards the Duke is almost sufficient to prove that love for Leonora was not his crime, or the cause of his imprisonment; for is it to be supposed that the high-minded, romantic Tasso, would have stooped to implore pardon for having loved? would on that account have acknowledged himself guilty of a sort of crime,—or sought, in the most humble manner, to be restored to the favour of a man who had driven him from the object of a pure, ardent, and honourable love?

Of Alfonso's general conduct towards Tasso, the earlier portion of it admits of some palliation, when it is considered that he possessed no superiority of mind to the rest of men, had been nurtured from youth in the vices of pride and austerity, and conceived that his elevated station entitled him to the servile homage and obedience of all around him. When this is considered, it appears that he must

have cherished no ordinary respect for Tasso, or he would never have borne with his complaints so long as he did, nor have sought for so long a time to remedy the ills he suffered. Nor is it easy to say for certainty whether many of the hardships, of which Tasso complained in St. Anna, were not in part the result of what the physicians who attended him prescribed. Mr. Wiffen, in the elegant memoir he has prefixed to his translation of the Gerusalemme, quotes the verses which the poet addressed to the Duke as a petition for some wine, and adds, with feeling, that it was "not so much to fill his heart with gladness as to deaden the weight of his affliction:" but Mr. Wiffen might have remembered that Mercuriale, the physician in whom Tasso placed the utmost confidence, and who could not be suspected of any design to annoy him, told him expressly that he must refrain from wine, such forbearance being absolutely necessary to his recovery. But still Alfonso can never be represented in any other character than that of a vindictive tyrant. Independent of the honour due to Tasso as the greatest genius Italy had seen for ages, the common rights of humanity ought to have preserved him from the protracted sufferings he endured at St. Anna, for it is most certain that he

was kept there when his disease required no such confinement, otherwise so many distinguished persons would not have petitioned for his liberation, nor would Alfonso have ever thought of stipulating for protection against his pen, as the condition of restoring him to freedom.

All the principal works of Tasso have been named in the course of the memoir, but they are so numerous and so various, that the slightest criticism of them separately would occupy more room than I can spare. Of the mind, however, which produced them, it may be said, that it was endowed with those higher powers which give sublimity to thought, while it was subject to all those milder influences of the feelings which keep it constantly within the verge of what is human, or of human interest. In the Gerusalemme, we trace that harmony of design which is the result only of pure intellect, disembarrassing itself of whatever hinders its orderly operation. In the Gerusalemme, we perceive the influence of that noble moral feeling which constitutes the distinction between the poetry of times and seasons, and that which lives, and of which the power and majesty are felt, through all ages; and in the Gerusalemme, we see those various representations of human character,

and those bold inventions which, together with the before-mentioned qualities, raise the epic poem above every other species of composition, appealing as it does to the sublimest attributes of our nature, and furnishing the mind with new food for the elevated emotions to which the verse of the poet gives birth. Nor is this the sole praise, great as it is, to which the Gerusalemme Liberata may justly lay claim. With the higher and severer merits of the epic, it blends the graces which hold the senses captive, and it frequently, in this respect, vies with the richest romance. This union of the noblest qualities that can adorn a production of the human mind, was the result of that rare combination of intellectual power, extreme sensibility of heart, and the profoundest erudition, which contributed to elevate and purify the character of Tasso in so extraordinary a degree. Never did there exist but three or four men who, with so passionate a love of study, possessed souls so alive to the indescribable sweetness of Nature; or who, fathoming the intricate and dark caverns of philosophy, preserved the light of poetry shining so vividly in their hearts. The Gerusalemme fills us, indeed, with wonder at the various and almost opposite excellencies it contains; but to estimate Tasso aright, his pastorals,

his sonnets, but above all, his dialogues, and his treatises on poetry must be studied; and if the pleasure be great which a reader of mind and sensibility finds in perusing the poems of this great man, the pleasure will be trebly greater, with which after enjoying the profound wisdom and lofty conceptions displayed in his various works, he will contemplate the intellectual portraiture of Tasso himself, beaming with all the rays of those thoughts concentred which beam through so many separate channels.

Tasso, however, did not acquire the fame he possesses without encountering many severe attacks, and the reader who is curious to know all that the subtlest critics have said in his praise or dispraise, may be amply satisfied by a reference to the works published in the controversy alluded to in the memoir. But in order that the principal objections of his opponents may be known, I shall here state them, following the abstract given by Serassi, and leaving it to the reader's own taste to judge of how much credit is due to them. The heads of these criticisms amount to ten, and are, 1. That the Gerusalemme is a mere history without a fable. 2. That it is disproportioned, confined, poor, mean, and unattractive. 3. That its style is so obscure, by being beyond all measure laconic

distorted, forced, and unusual, that it cannot be generally understood. 4. That it contains a mixture of words taken from different languages, and many of them so pedantic and improper, that the sound of them provokes laughter. 5. That the verses are often unmusical and disagreeably abrupt. 6. That his sentences want that energy and point which characterize those of Ariosto. 7. That in attempting to move the affections he is dry, forced, and cold. 8. That in his comparisons he is low and pedantic. 9. That he might have described manners better. And 10. that he fails in keeping his story together, not knowing how to resume the narrative whenever he makes a break.

We need scarcely remark, that most of these objections were clearly dictated by a violent and ungenerous spirit, and that they are all of them adduced too broadly and intemperately to be received by those who are uninfluenced by the same feelings as the writers who started them. It must not, however, be denied, that Tasso's language is occasionally too ambitious of ornament; and that there are parts of his story which in some degree injure the compactness of the plan, and are not in perfect harmony with the main subject; but these defects are not so great but that they will be

forgotten the moment the reader begins to feel the sublimity and beauty which reign in almost every page of the poem.

Notwithstanding the censures above alluded to, and though he suffered considerable uneasiness from the carelessness of printers, the avarice of booksellers, and from the bad management of his friends, as well as the malice of his enemies, Tasso's life, in a literary point of view, was not an unfortunate one. Whatever other troubles he had to endure, he was not doomed to suffer the bitter pangs inflicted on genius by neglect. In the lowest state of his fortunes he knew that his name was honoured in the world; when torn with despair at finding himself confined like a maniac, his self-respect was kept up by visits or letters from the learned men of all Italy, who took pleasure in declaring their high estimation of his works; and when travelling without a scudo in his pocket wherewith to provide food or shelter, he had but to say that he was Tasso, to receive an ample provision for his wants. Even the Prince, who had treated him with so much cruelty and contumely, trembled when he remembered him as a poet; and he left his bed in a common hospital to be solicited by other princes to honour their courts by his presence. Thus dark as the sky was

which lowered over him, there was no ebb-tide in his fame, which went on increasing to the last days of his life, when he was able to purchase by the dedication of a poem, a home in the palace of the Vatican, and the lasting gratitude of the most powerful rulers of the Church. The story even of Tasso's life has thus its bright as well as its dark side, and it affords relief to the mind, lamenting the distresses of so pure and noble-hearted a being, to find that he was not only supported through many of his trials by a devout spirit, but was an object of that compensatory system of Divine Providence, the operation of which we discover to be more and more general, the better we become acquainted with individual history.

CHIABRERA, TASSONI, &c.

With the life of Tasso closed the most splendid, and, perhaps, the last splendid era of Italian poetry. The period was approaching when the wounded spirit of her Muse would exclaim, "Italia, Italia! why wert thou not less beautiful or more powerful?" and when the yoke of Spain and Austria, combined with that imposed upon her for centuries

past by a corrupt Church, would press so heavy upon her children, that could their Dante have risen from his grave, or their divine Petrarch, they would scarce have had heart to delight in their highest and most animated strains. Various orders of genius may flourish, like plants, in various soils, and under various circumstances. Seasons of great political excitement may give that sudden and necessary impulse to some minds, without which they might never have been roused into exertion; and others, again, may be able to work with considerable energy at such times, but not produce their most precious fruits of genius and knowledge till they are able to retire within themselves from the agitations of the world; and this appears to be the case with the most powerful and sublimest intellects. Milton wrote treatises while an active politician, which may well astonish us by their magnificent and impressive language; but it was before he entered the world that he composed his Comus, and it was not till after he had left it that he wrote Paradise Lost. Ariosto was obliged to resist the temptations of courts that he might finish his poem in quiet and in his own garden. Dante, though a true and a great politician, only made himself great for ever by often seeking the deepest retirement;

and Petrarch, who could make pontiffs tremble at his harangues, could only write for immortality beneath the shades of Vaucluse or among the Euganean hills. But though the purest and the most valuable fruits of the human intellect are chiefly brought to perfection in retirement, and when they have solitude and reflection to ripen them, there are sufficient exceptions to the principle to let us know, that the mind of man can pursue its particular object with a thousand things to divert its attention, and with little or nothing to aid it in its pursuit. There seems, however, to be one state of things in which its noblest faculties almost invariably cease from action, and it is that into which a foreign despotism throws a people — a despotism, against the infamy of which no subterfuge of the imagination is available, and to see their countrymen quietly and universally submit to which, makes the few, who can still think and feel nobly, despair of awakening that general sympathy, confidence in which is almost as necessary to men of genius as their genius itself. But as talent is never long willing to hide itself, it becomes reconciled by degrees to the conditions imposed on its exercise, and the highest intellect learns to wear its chains as contentedly as the darkest and

weakest. Thus the literature of a country becomes debased, first, by the bonds put upon the mind; next, by its purchasing its freedom at the expense of its honesty. The learned men of Italy, and those who naturally possessed pure and exalted minds, seeing their country reduced to a state of servitude both hopeless and helpless, were rendered, almost by a moral necessity, less anxious about the real grandeur and worth of fame; for those who were to confer it, both princes and people, were incapacitated from bestowing the boon, bright and enduring as the poet ought to receive it. Thus becoming less anxious for popular renown, and less desirous to obtain that mastery over the natural feelings of mankind, which is the test by which the worth and power of poetry are to be judged, they began to seek only the favour of princes, and of those even who by their treachery or pusillanimity had sunk Italy so low. The taste of sovereigns such as these is seldom very pure or very natural, and under their tutelage the Muse of Italy speedily ceased to speak in the clear and classic tones which distinguished her ancient song even in the courts of princes.

The period of which I am speaking is a sad one for the historian of Italy, whether he treat of civil

or literary affairs, nor is it less so for the biographer. He feels himself among a new order of men, few of whom bear any signs of relationship with those with whom he was lately conversing. Their style, their sentiments, the objects they pursue, are all different to those which characterized the previous generation. He can but rarely feel deeply interested in their fortunes, more influenced by the occurrences produced by passions common to all men than by the deep workings of the poet's heart; as seldom can he feel himself moved with admiration of their sentiments, so low and feebly expressed; and still less can he take pleasure in tracing out the course of their career when he finds in how many instances their lives were almost a free-will offering to their masters, whose favour the venality of their muse was not sufficient to conciliate.

It would be a useless and uninteresting task to name the host of indifferent writers who lived in the seventeenth century, and are termed among their countrymen, by way of contempt, "I Seicentisti;" I shall confine myself, therefore, to the notice of the three or four, who, in that age of poetical dearth, produced works at all worthy of being read by posterity. The first of these is Gabriello

Chiabrera, who was born at Savona, June 8, 1552, and fifteen days after the death of his father.* His mother did not remain long a widow, and Gabriello was received into the house of his father's brother and sister, neither of whom were married. At the age of nine his uncle took him to Rome, where he resided, and provided him with a private tutor, from whom he learned Latin. But his studies were greatly interrupted by two violent fevers, one of which attacked him on his arrival in Rome, and the other about two years afterwards, keeping him for seven months in the utmost peril of death. On his recovery, his uncle sent him to the Jesuits' College, in order that by sharing in the exercises of boys of his own age, he might strengthen his delicate constitution at the same time that he pursued the study of philosophy. He continued at the college till he was twenty, when he paid a short visit to his mother at Savona, and on his return to Rome attached himself to the Court of the Cardinal Cornaro Camerlingo, with whom he remained several years. Unfortunately, however, he had a violent dispute with some gentleman, and, to resent the insult he had received, a duel took place, in which, it appears, he killed his adversary and was immediately obliged to flee. He remained, he

* Vita da Stesso, Opere, vol. i.

says, as if banished from Rome; but as he enjoyed perfect leisure in his own country, he gave himself up to the attractions of literature, which he pursued without interruption, till, in a broil with some person, which, according to his own assertion, was owing to no fault of his, he received a slight wound; —"his own hand took revenge," are his words in describing this affair, and he was put under confinement several months. At the same time that he was suffering in this manner from the indulgence of his impetuous disposition, he saw himself in danger of seeing his property confiscated, which would certainly have taken place but for the interference of Cardinal Cintio Aldobrandini, the friend of Tasso, who obtained its restoration. This enabled him to pass the rest of his life in quiet and independence, and at the age of fifty he married Lelia Pavese, the daughter of Giulio Pavese and Marzia Spinola. His health, he informs his readers, was more than commonly good, and, except during the illnesses above mentioned, he had never kept his bed: "And this," says he, at the end of his brief autobiography, "is all there is to tell of Gabriello as a common citizen, and this is little worth knowing."

As a writer, however, he thinks more particular information may be required respecting him. He

therefore informs us that he was intimate with Antonio Mureto, and a bosom friend of Sperone Speroni; that on his return to Savona he studied poetry with the utmost attention, and especially Pindar and other Greek classics, taking delight in attempting to imitate the style and manner of the great Theban. In like manner he imitated Anacreon, Simonides, and Sappho; and with this fondness for the ancients was combined as great a boldness in regard to his own language and the customary forms of its poetry. Thus, considering that it wanted greater firmness in the sound of its verses, he terminated many of his words with consonants as Dante had done, as in *Feton*, *Prezzon*, and others. He also ventured on combining two or more in one, which his favourite Greek taught him to attempt, as *Oricrinata*, *riccaddobbata;* an in the composition of tragedies he considered that the personages and plot might be more advantageously drawn from modern histories than from those of more distant periods. It was his common observation, indeed, that the poets of Italy were too timid in respect to their art, and that he was like his countryman, Christopher Columbus, deter mined to discover a new world or to drown.

In giving his opinion of the writers whom he

chiefly esteemed, he observed, that Homer was the most excellent that ever lived for narrative; that Virgil was remarkable for beauty of verse, and skill in the use of figurative language; Dante, for the power of representing and particularizing things; and Ariosto for a similar quality. Of poetry itself, he always spoke with the highest admiration; and to let it be known that he valued the respect he had obtained by its means above honours of any other kind, the impress he wore on his seal was a laurel with a motto furnished by a line of Petrarch's,—

"Non ho, se non quest' uno."

The reputation he enjoyed was amply sufficient to put him in good humour both with the world and his art. The Dukes of Florence, of Savoy, and Modena, invited him to their courts, employed him in composing pièces for their theatres on great occasions, and when they could not prevail upon him to fix his permanent residence in their capitals, would not suffer him to depart till they had conferred on him magnificent presents. The Duke of Savoy, whenever Chiabrera visited his court, gave him three hundred livres on his taking farewell, pretending that it was merely to defray the expenses of his journey, whereas Savona was not more than

fifty miles distant, and also sent him forward in a splendid carriage drawn by four horses. Equal honour was paid him by the Pope, and a respect even still more flattering by his fellow-townsmen. When Savona, on the occasion of a war, was filled with soldiers, the Council exempted the house of the poet Chiabrera from the claims of the military; and the Grand-duke of Tuscany would not allow him to remain standing, or keep his head uncovered in his presence.

Chiabrera lived to the age of eighty-six and some months, and was, it seems, for many years before his death as good a Catholic as poet. "He had been a sinner," says he, "but was not without Christian devotion. He had had Saint Lucia for his intercessor for the space of sixty years, and never omitted to recommend himself to her compassion twice a day."

Among the few writers who obtained any great celebrity between the death of Tasso and the appearance of Metastasio, Chiabrera is, perhaps, the first. His lyrical compositions are extolled by the most accomplished critics, as partaking greatly of the fire and energy which distinguish the odes of Pindar, while his imitations of Anacreon are equally successful in delighting the

reader by their gentleness and elegance. Many other authors before his time had attempted the same styles, but had not succeeded, and to Chiabrera the honour is given of having surpassed all his predecessors in transfusing into the lighter species of Italian poetry the force and beauty of the Greek.

Chiabrera's long life and enthusiastic love of his art rendered him a very voluminous writer. He composed no less than five epic poems; the Italia Liberata; the Gotiade; the Ruggiero; the Firenge; and the Amadei; but these productions have contributed little to the fame he enjoys as a lyric poet, for which he was formed by Nature. His dramatic compositions were still more numerous, and were many of them produced at the request of the Princes at whose courts he visited. As those which he wrote for the purpose of contributing to the splendour of courtly festivals were accompanied with music, they are considered as affording the earliest specimens which exist of the modern opera.*

Sonnets and other miscellaneous pieces contributed to employ the few vacant hours left between the production of his other works; and not content with making these various efforts in his

* Sismondi.

legitimate province, he turned theologian, and wrote treatises on the Passion of our Saviour, and similar subjects.

Contemporary with Chiabrera, and possessing an equal degree of fame, but of a different kind, was Alessandro Tassoni, who was born at Modena on the 28th of September, 1565.* Still more unfortunate in his infancy than Chiabrera, death deprived him of both his parents before he left the cradle, and the relations on whose kindness he had to depend for protection seem to have regarded him with the utmost indifference. All the troubles and miserable feelings which may be supposed to attend such a situation as Tassoni's, were experienced by him to their full extent; but notwithstanding the unkindness and even persecutions of his friends, he felt an early and irresistible love of learning, which, on his becoming a pupil of the distinguished Lazzaro Labadini, was displayed by the rapid progress he made in the Greek and Latin languages. He continued this and other branches of study till he was eighteen, when he gave a conspicuous proof of his powers of composition, by writing a Latin poem, to which he

* Muratori. Secchia Rapita, 1744.

affixed the name of "Errico," and about the same time received the degree of doctor.

Almost immediately after completing the course of studies pursued in the academy of his native place, he proceeded, still resolutely bent on acquiring literary distinction, to Bologna. That celebrated university, so long the rendezvous of the ablest professors in Europe, and the temple in which the young and ambitious aspirants after fame paid for so many ages their preparatory vows to philosophy, proved for Tassoni the happiest residence he could have found; and he remained there till the year 1590 or 1591, when he returned to Modena.

He remained at Modena the two following years, visiting, it seems probable, the university of Ferrara during that period. Finding it, however, difficult to support himself on his small income, he resolved upon going to Rome, where he arrived at the end of 1596 or the beginning of 1597. His merits being quickly made known, he became secretary to the Cardinal Ascanio Colonna, the son of the celebrated Marco Antonio, who obtained the surname of Il Trionfatore, from his signal victory over the Turkish fleet in 1571.

The Cardinal conceiving hopes of securing some

important advantage by a visit to the Court of Spain, proceeded thither in the year 1600, and took Tassoni with him. They remained in Spain above two years, the Cardinal profiting so well by his visit that he was declared Viceroy of Arragon. Tassoni in consequence of this was sent back to Italy to obtain the Pope's ratification of the appointment, which was speedily granted, and the Secretary, trusting that his advancement in the Church could now not fail of being rapid, took orders before his return to his master. Whilst on his passage to Spain, he wrote his "Considerazioni" on Petrarch, to lessen the tedium of the voyage; but he had scarcely seen the Cardinal when it was intimated to him that in fifteen days he would have to return to Italy, his Excellency explaining to him that he found it necessary to appoint some faithful person to attend to his interests at Rome, informing him also that the salary allowed him would be six hundred scudi of gold.

From some cause or other, which none of his biographers have been able to discover, he had left the service of the Cardinal in 1605, and was enjoying his liberty and leisure at Contorse, in the territory of Naples. After a short sojourn in that place, he returned to Rome, and having be-

come a member of the Accademia degli Umoristi, established four or five years before, he was in 1606 or 1607 elected its President. He also became a member of the academy of the Luicei about the same time, and in 1608 published his "Quisiti," on subjects which he had brought before that learned body. The following year he published the Considerations on Petrarch, and raised against himself a host of opponents whose prejudices he had offended by disputing the propriety of that extreme veneration in which they held their favourite author. His work entitled "Varietà di Pensieri," which appeared soon after the others, met with similar criticisms from the bigoted admirers of Aristotle and Homer.

In 1613 he passed into the service of the Duke of Savoy, by whom he was liberally rewarded, and who took his advice in the most important affairs of state; but the jealousy of the Duke's courtiers, and the dislike in which he was held by the Spaniards, to whom he had a known antipathy, obliged the Duke, much against his will, to dismiss him; and Tassoni, to defend himself against the slanders to which this circumstance might give rise, immediately issued a manifesto, affording a full account of his conduct.

Again left without occupation, he took a house

at Rome, near the Palazzo de' Riari, and amused himself with alternately studying and working in his garden. Shooting and other field sports also formed part of his favourite amusements; but in 1626 the Cardinal Lodovisio unsolicited called him to his Court, appointing him a salary of four hundred Roman scudi, and chambers in his palace. He remained in this situation till the Cardinal's death, which occurred in 1632, and he was no sooner left without employ, than the Duke of Modena gave him an honourable office in his court, and a liberal stipend. He continued in the service of this Prince till his death; but he had not been in it a year before his health began to decline, and continued to do so all 1634. At the commencement of the following year he was obliged to keep his bed, and on the 25th of April he finished his career at Modena, where he had resided since the commencement of his connexion with the Duke. He was buried with great pomp in the church of Saint Peter belonging to the Benedictine monastery, and in the vault of the Tassoni, before the altar of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, in the sacristy; but no inscription exists to show the place where his bones are deposited.*

* Muratori.

Tassoni was one of the most learned men of the age, and possessed sufficient activity and boldness of mind to examine the subjects on which he interested himself rather than take the judgment of ages without questioning its correctness. His conversation is described as having been frank, and lively or serious as it suited the occasion, while the Secchia Rapita, on which his fame now chiefly rests, is a sufficient proof of his having possessed an original and most abundant fund of humour.

This celebrated poem has had many admirers, among whom it has enjoyed the reputation of being the earliest comic epopee in the Italian language. Its claims, however, in this respect, have been very warmly disputed; and the same honour has been claimed for the "Scherno degli Dei," or "Ridicule of the Gods," a comic poem, written by Francesco Bracciolini, a native of Pistoia, contemporary with Tassoni, and who passed the principal part of his life in the service of Urban VIII. His poem above-mentioned, was published four years before Tassoni's, and it therefore seemed, at first sight, unreasonable to allow the praise of priority to the Secchia Rapita; but to this objection it was answered that though Bracciolini was the first to publish his mock heroic, that poem was not written

till many years after that of Tassoni's, who, it was credibly asserted, composed his Secchia Rapita while quite a young man, and only deferred its publication for fear of hurting his prospects in the Church by its apparent levity. To this again it was objected that Tassoni asserted the early composition of the work, only because he thought it would be considered unbecoming in an old man to employ his time on such trifles. From a careful comparison, however, of the evidence on both sides, it is generally believed that Tassoni had written his work some time before Bracciolini's was printed; and that if there were imitation on either side, it was on that of the latter author, who, it is conjectured, might by some chance have gained a sight of his rival's manuscript, or otherwise become acquainted with its character.

But still less doubt exists as to the respective merit of the poems, the Secchia Rapita excelling the other both in versification and invention, and possessing sufficient intrinsic merit to obviate in a great measure the objections to which it is liable from the limited nature of the subject, which, though diffused into twelve books, has no other foundation than the circumstance, that in one of the petty contests carried on between Bologna and

Modena, a party of warriors belonging to the latter city had the boldness to carry off a bucket from a well in the middle of Bologna, and which bucket was ever after kept safely locked up in the belfry of the cathedral of Modena, a monument of eternal renown for the Modenese, and of a disgrace equally enduring for their opponents. A considerable degree of true humour is displayed in the account of the desperate rencounters which took place between the forces of the two cities in consequence of this event; and passages not unfrequently occur of a different character, in which the poet makes a display of his power in lofty and animating description.

Chiabrera himself did not enjoy a more splendid reputation during his life, than Giambattista Marini, who, while he was regarded in the age in which he lived as one of the greatest poets that Italy had ever produced, has been since stigmatized as the most contagious corruptor of its good taste.* This very popular writer was born at Naples, in October 1569, and was intended by his father, himself a very wealthy jurisconsult, for the profession of the law. He was accordingly at an

* Tiraboschi.

early age placed under the best masters to qualify him for pursuing his future employment with credit and advantage, but every endeavour made to fix him to legal pursuits failed, and he was constantly found immersed in the study of his favourite poets. His father's temper could ill brook the disappointment he experienced at this untowardness, as he esteemed it, in his son's disposition, and when he found him becoming a poet himself, and publishing his " Canzoni de' baci," he could no longer repress his indignation, but denied him the house, and sent him to find what shelter he might from the want which stared him in the face. Happily, however, for him, the Duke of Bovino, the Prince of Conca, mentioned in the life of Tasso, and the well-known Manso, Marquis of Villa, admired his genius too much to leave him unprotected, and in the houses of one or other of these noblemen he passed the next three years of his life. He might, it is probable, have remained with them still longer, but having taken part with a friend in some love affair, in which the passion of the latter got the better of his prudence, or the fear of the law, he was apprehended with his companion and thrown into prison. By the earnest

* Rime. G. F. Loredano, Ven. 1664.

intercessions of his powerful friends, he obtained his liberty without having suffered any farther punishment than a brief confinement; but his associate was less fortunate, and he used every means in his power to obtain his release, till finding that his exertions, while they proved of no avail for his friend, were putting him in hourly peril of being again thrown into prison, he hastily took his leave of Naples, and made the best of his way to Rome. There he became acquainted with Salviani, who introduced him to Melchione Crescenzi, by whom he was hospitably entertained, and suffered to pursue his poetical studies undisturbed. After availing himself for some time of Crescenzi's kindness, he made a journey to Venice, where he was already regarded as a poet of great repute; he, however, returned to Rome after a short stay in that city, and was received into the service of the Cardinal Cintio.

When that distinguished churchman left Rome, Marini accompanied him to various Italian courts, and at that of Turin attracted the admiration of the Duke and a numerous circle of the nobility. So highly were his abilities estimated, that the Duke made him a Cavalier of the order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, and appointed him his

Secretary. But the favour he thus enjoyed created him several enemies, and among the foremost was Gasparo Murtola, who was also Secretary to the Duke, and the author of a poem entitled "Il Mondo Creato," published at the period of Marini's arrival. Opposed to each other from feelings of rivalship, which were kept alive by envy of each other's fortune, as well as by the ambition of literary superiority, they poured out the most violent and indecent invectives, till Murtola, setting no bounds to his rage, watched Marini one day as he was walking with the Duke and some courtiers, and, being provided with a gun, fired at him from the corner of a street. The ball missed the poet, but struck one of the Duke's attendants, and Murtola was immediately seized and placed in confinement. Marini, however, was so far from triumphing at his rival's disgrace and danger, that he petitioned the Duke with the greatest earnestness to pardon and liberate the offender. His generous interference was attended to, and Murtola was liberated, when, to his infamy be it spoken, the first use he made of his freedom was to vilify his deliverer, and accuse him to the Duke of having ridiculed him in a poem, which Marini immediately proved had been written many

years before he had known or seen that Prince. His protestations, however, availed him little; he was cast into prison, and kept there till Manso wrote from Naples to confirm his assertion respecting the early date of the poem in question.

Marini did not remain long in Turin after this affair, but proceeding to France, obtained the patronage of Mary de' Medici, whose liberality prevented his feeling the loss of Queen Margaret, by whom he had been invited to Paris. His residence there commenced in 1615, and was of many years' continuance. During that period he produced his "Adonis," a poem exhibiting many signs of a most luxuriant fancy, and rich both in language and invention, but debased in the former by most of those faults with which bad taste alloys the pure gold of poetic expression, and in the former by a want of propriety and nature; the refinements of wit being too abundantly mixed up with the glowing, but still natural creations of the imagination.

The publication of the Adonis, which appeared in 1623, excited a new controversy with the author. He had already, besides that with Murtola, been obliged to sustain one with numerous assailants, who took occasion, from his confounding the

Lernæan hydra with the Nemæan lion, in a poem addressed to a friend, to abuse him in the most violent terms. At the head of the party which attacked him on the appearance of the Adonis was Tomaso Stigliani, a poet of small repute in the service of the Duke of Parma. He began his career as an imitator of Marini, but, jealous of the fame of his master, and wishing to avoid the appearance of being his follower, he ventured to ridicule him in an epic poem entitled "Il Mondo Nuovo," in a passage of which, by a play on his name, he represented him under the figure of a fish called Uomo-marino, or Sea-man. Marini replied to his attacks with sufficient spirit, and in the ninth canto of the Adonis, repaid Stigliani's compliment by describing him as an owl. The author of Il Mondo Nuovo shrank from the lash of his opponent, so infinitely the superior: but, though he feared to engage with him in personal invective, he had still enough courage left to write a criticism on the Adonis, though not to publish it till after Marini's death, when he was assailed by so many defenders of the poem that he was glad to retreat from the field.

Marini returned to Italy about the same time that the Adonis was given to the world, and, on his arrival

at Rome, was treated by numerous personages of distinction with the most flattering attention; but he preferred the house of his friend Crescenzi's brother, to any of the palaces which were open to receive him, and fixing his residence there, he was shortly after elected President of the Academy of the Humorists. He continued at Rome till the death of Gregory XV., whose nephew was his principal benefactor. On the occurrence of that event he returned to Naples, where he was received with as much honour as would have been conferred on a general returning from the most splendid conquests. He was soon after invited back to Rome by the new Pope, Urban VIII., but was prevented by death, to which he fell a victim in March 1625. The chief characteristics of Marini's style have been already alluded to, but, unfortunately, it has a worse fault than those classed under the head of offences against taste, its frequent and gross offences, namely, against decency and morality. Unfortunately, it is remarked by Tiraboschi, this pruriency of language gained him readers, and we may thence learn how rapidly both good taste and good manners were on the decline. In France the Adonis was popular long after the death of the author, and is quoted with admiration by Rousseau

in his New Eloise. Italy also would have continued to rank him among the chief of her poets, but for the faults above-mentioned, which, if they prevent not an author's popularity in his own age, when the corruption of society or taste may favour his errors, will infallibly involve him in obscurity whenever an improvement takes place in his country, or the directors of popular opinion choose to oppose him.

Marini's influence on the poetical literature of Italy was considerable, and he had numerous imitators, at the head of whom are generally placed Claudio Achillini and Girolamo Preti, who, it is singular, were both citizens of Bologna, and both lawyers. The former had been in the employ of Gregory XV. before he was raised to the Pontificate, and had formed hopes of advancement, the disappointment of which induced him to leave his country and seek his fortune in France. To secure success he immediately became the flatterer of Richelieu, and began his appeals to the Cardinal's vanity in a sonnet which was intended to applaud his zeal in the prosecution of war, and of which the first line was

Sudate, O fuochi, preparar metalli—
Sweat, O ye fires, the metal to prepare—

a thought which Achillini's critics have determined to preserve from oblivion, however the rest of his poetry may be forgotten. A canzone, however, which he addressed to the same personage on the birth of the Dauphin, and which was full of absurdities, gained him the attention he sought, and the admiration of a numerous tribe of imitators. He returned to Italy, and died in October 1640.

Girolamo Preti was, in his early youth, a page in the Court of the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso II., but he subsequently settled at Bologna in order to study the law with greater advantage. The attractions of poetry, however, overcame his desire of professional eminence, and he became an ardent imitator of Marini. He travelled into Spain with the Cardinal Francesco Barberini, and died in that country in 1626. His name is principally remembered on account of his being one of the first and most attentive disciples of the new school.

Fulvio Testi was a poet of greater genius, but, notwithstanding, a servile imitator of a bad model. He was born at Ferrara in 1593, but was taken to Modena when about five years old. His life was that of a courtier, and, consequently, a very chequered one. In January 1646, owing to some

political offence, he was thrown into prison, and remained confined in the citadel of Modena to the end of his days, which were terminated in the August of the same year. The distinguishing characteristic of his style is an energy which might have advanced him to excellency had he been less infected with the corrupt taste of his age.

Niccolò, Fortiguerra, or Carteromaco, was born at Pistoia, in 1674, and early evinced a strong attachment to poetry. After studying Jurisprudence at Pisa under Averani, and having taken the degree of Doctor, he proceeded to Rome, and thence accompanied the Pope's Legate, Zondari, to Spain. His health obliging him to return after an absence of about eighteen months, he had the good fortune to be appointed, through the influence of Cardinal Fabroni, honorary chamberlain to Clement XI. and to receive soon after a rich canonry, and two prebendaries referendary.

Fortiguerra's love of poetry suffered no diminution from his advancement in rank. In the Academy of the Arcadians, among whom he was called Nidalino Tisco, he distinguished himself by his recitations, and happening to be spending the autumn of 1715 with some friends in the country, he was induced, by a trifling circumstance, to commence his celebrated poem of Ricciardetto. Pulci,

Berni, and Ariosto, were the authors who chiefly engaged his attention and that of his companions, and some of them chancing to observe that the most exquisite art must have been employed by those writers in overcoming the difficulties of the Ottava Rima, he replied that he believed the supposed difficulties to be merely imaginary, and engaged to bring the first canto of a poem the next evening to confirm this opinion. The promise was fulfilled, to the great delight of his companions; and he in time produced a poem in thirty cantoes, full of wonders, romance, and humour, but disfigured by a levity, little becoming in a churchman.

Benedict XIII. regarded him with a less favourable eye than the two preceding Popes, but he was again received into notice by Clement XII., and appointed Secretary to the Propaganda. It was the Pontiff's wish to advance him still higher, but the office that he intended for him was at the same time sought by a friend of the Cardinal Corsini, whose influence Fortiguerra considered it vain to resist. He accordingly yielded his pretensions, but the disappointment brought on an illness of which he died in February 1735. A translation of Terence, a tract on painting, &c. and three cantoes of an Epic poem, escaped the order he gave on his death-bed for the destruction of all his manuscripts.

The Life of Metastasio.

Metastasio.

Pietro Metastasio, or Trapassi, was born at Rome on the 13th of January 1698.* His parents, Felice Trapassi d'Assisi and Francesca Galasti da Bologna, were poor but respectable. The former had been obliged by the misfortunes of his family to enter the army, but he had, by frugality and industry, contrived to save a sum of money sufficient to enter into partnership with a friend, and open a booth at Rome for the sale of oil, meal, and other articles of that kind. His sobriety and constant attention to his concerns were rewarded with success, and he employed a part of his gains

* Fran. Altanesi. Cordara. Reina.

in the liberal education of his children. Pietro, in whom a superior intellect manifested itself at an early period, was sent to the public schools in best repute at the time, and his progress was equal to the most anxious wishes of his excellent father. When not more than ten years old, he astonished his friends by singing extemporary verses on any circumstance that happened to occur, and to this extraordinary faculty he owed the foundation of his future fortune and celebrity. Happening one evening, after returning from school, and while waiting to go home with his father, to be singing at the door of the booth, his little musical voice and the simple sweetness of his rhymes attracted the attention of the celebrated lawyer Gravina, who was passing at the time with his friend Lorenzini. After listening some minutes, and discovering that the verses were not repeated from memory, the learned man was unable to repress his astonishment, but went up and caressed the child with the greatest tenderness, and presented him with some money. The little minstrel, however, whose feelings were as delicate as his mind, politely refused to accept it, and this trait charming Gravina still more, he immediately made his admiration known to Felice and his wife; and

telling them that he would be both a father and a mother to their child, prevailed upon them to say that they would surrender him to his care.

It is not difficult to imagine how many hopes the father and mother suggested to each other that evening, as reasons for parting with their child. The Abate was very wealthy, was highly esteemed, and had great influence. Francesca, these things considered, could not help agreeing with her husband, that not to let Pietro leave them with such prospects of fortune would be highly injudicious. The following morning, therefore, the affectionate mother took her little son to Gravina's house, and there left him, after receiving new assurances of the care and tenderness with which he would be treated.

Gravina was delighted with his new charge, and, in adopting him for his own, changed his name into that of Metastasio, the Greek, in fact, of Trapassi. But, though possessing sufficient penetration and good taste to discover the genius of his pupil, he could not decide upon educating him solely with a view to the developement of that particular species of talent with which Nature had endowed him. He took him for some time to Crotona to study philosophy, but, being a lawyer and an advocate,

he desired to bring up Pietro to the same pursuits as those he himself followed with success, and sought to modify the talent which had originally attracted his admiration. Finding Pietro's passion for poetry gaining strength every day, his desire was to confine him entirely to imitations of the Greek classics, to which he alone gave the praise of great excellence.

In both instances Metastasio sought to obey the directions of his kind patron, and his docility, it has been observed, overcame the impetuosity of nature. Following the rigid rules laid down by Gravina, he wrote, at fourteen, the tragedy of "Giustino" in strict conformity with the laws of the Greek drama; but, while he thus limited the natural flow of his fancy, his power of extemporary versification continued to increase, and in the literary parties given by his patron, he frequently displayed this talent to the astonishment of his auditors, and sometimes joined the famous Cavalier Perfetti in what has been called Pindaric conflicts.

The longer Gravina and his pupil remained together, and the more they saw of each other, the more closely they became attached—the one softening the prejudices and strict opinions of a long life of close study, to gratify his youthful pupil,

—the other resisting his inclinations, to demonstrate his respect and gratitude for his master. But, unfortunately for Metastasio, he had scarcely reached his twentieth year, when the friend of his youth was removed from him by death. The grief he experienced at this event was of the deepest kind, and many of his compositions evince how affectionately he continued through life to regard Gravina's memory.

By the death of his friend, who had constituted him his heir, Metastasio found himself in the possession of a respectable fortune; and, being of an age when melancholy is seldom of long continuance, he had no sooner recovered from the first impressions of sorrow, occasioned by the loss of his master, than he gave himself up to the luxurious enjoyment of liberty, poetry, and the society of his friends. The study of the law, at which he had laboured to satisfy Gravina, was thenceforth no longer thought of; his house was constantly open to those who had either taste to enjoy his compositions or could bring any of their own worth reciting, and as he was thus seldom without company, the expenses of his living were in a short time considerably greater than his income. Happily for him, he discovered his error before he had left him-

self completely destitute, and he determined, while a small portion of his property still remained, to begin living in a style of the most rigid economy, and thus preserve his independence. To this resolution he was also led by discovering that many of those who had praised his verses while enjoying his dinners, were the mere flatterers of his good fortune, and that the men of rank whom he had courted were utterly inattentive to his interests when opportunities occurred of serving him. This he discovered particularly, when he applied for a vacant office in the Pontifical Court, and seeing no hope, therefore, of advancement, or any other reason for remaining at Rome, he sold what property he had left there, and, fully resolved on recommencing the study of the law, proceeded to Naples.

Immediately on his arrival in that city, he hastened to the house of Castagnola, one of the most able lawyers of the place, and of whose character and practice he had taken care to gain information before leaving Rome. Having obtained the desired interview, he began by explaining his wish to resume his studies, and become a skilful advocate; he also assured the jurisconsult that he would devote himself with the utmost diligence to follow his directions, and perform the duties which might

be entrusted to him with all due care and attention; adding to this some few intimations of his reputation for ability, and his accomplishments as a poet. But his allusion to poetry was almost fatal to him. The lawyer was horror-struck at the idea, and expressed his abomination of all such pursuits, but having vented his spleen against the Muses, ended the conversation by agreeing to take Pietro under his charge. The terror he had felt at the thought of being reduced to want, or a state of servile dependence, had operated with such force on the mind of our poet, that he patiently endured not only the first rudeness of the lawyer, but submitted to the weary and vexatious drudgery he had subsequently to endure. His master, though so severe in rebuking him for his inclination to make verses, was not long insensible to his merits and the sweetness of his disposition, and in proportion as his hopes increased of making him a respectable lawyer, he became more friendly and attentive.

But a circumstance shortly after occurred which at once put an end to Metastasio's designs, and the expectations of his master. It was the custom at Naples to celebrate the birth-days of the Austrian Princes with every variety of public

rejoicings; and that of the Empress Elizabeth Christina, consort of Charles VI., occurring during her pregnancy, the Viceroy desired to distinguish it with extraordinary pomp and splendour. Among other amusements intended were those of the theatre, and it was thought that the situation of the Empress ought to be made a subject of popular congratulation, as prayers had been for some time offered up throughout the Austrian dominions, that offspring might be granted to the reigning sovereign. There were, it is said, crowds of musicians and actors in Naples to furnish materials for the adorning and performance of the spectacles, but no poet could be found to write a new drama for the purpose intended by the Viceroy. At last, Metastasio, whose reputation, it appears, had followed him from Rome, was mentioned as fully competent to perform the task. Metastasio was accordingly sent for to Court, and informed of the object which the Viceroy had in view. The young lawyer was, it is reported, not a little distressed at finding a new temptation held out to him to resume an occupation which had already so nearly driven him to ruin. But the Viceroy had been shown some verses of his composition which had so greatly delighted him that no observations he could make respecting his

incapacity or inexperience, no confessions as to the situation in which he stood with regard to the lawyer his master, made any impression on the Viceroy, who insisted on his employing his talents on the occasion mentioned. Finding no means of escape, poor Metastasio was obliged to consent, regarding himself as a sacrifice to his loyalty. There was, however, one means by which the evil consequences which he dreaded so much might in some measure be averted, and that was to impose upon the Viceroy a solemn promise to keep his name a secret, which assurance, having represented how necessary it was to his peace, he at last obtained.

Though writing at the command of the first man in the kingdom, the terrified poet dare only attend to the composition of his drama after he retired to his room at night, or in the few minutes he could occasionally steal in the day, when his master was out, or was busily employed on some difficult case. But his fertile genius overcame every hindrance, and some time before the festival approached, he took his drama, the "Orti Esperidi," to the Viceroy. The ingenuity of the plot and the unusual beauty of the dialogue, greatly surpassed the expectations of that august

personage, and after bestowing on the author the most glowing praise, he presented him with a purse of two hundred ducats.

The day at length arrived for the performance of this celebrated drama. The most skilful musician known in Naples furnished the accompaniments; and an artist of equal celebrity had been engaged in providing the decorations, which were of the most splendid description. Crowds were attracted to the theatre by the fame of the intended spectacle; but it was from the magnificence of the scenery, or the excellence of the music only that pleasure was looked for; and when the spectators heard the performers uttering language conceived in the purest spirit of poetry, and discovered the admirable skill with which the plot was developed, and the workings of the passions delineated with so much truth and power, their delight became unbounded; all ears and hearts were eager to catch every word that fell, and woe, says an old writer, was it to him who chanced to make any little noise, for the people, eager not to lose even half a line, punished the offender with such a volley of abuse, that he was glad to make his immediate escape. Nor was it merely during the representation that public approbation

was thus strongly manifested. Nothing was talked of but the new drama in every quarter of Naples, and numerous persons were overflowing with gratitude to the unknown author for the profit they had derived through its popularity. Among these especially, were the printer, the musician, the actors, and above all, the far-famed Cantatrice Marianna Bulgarelli.

In proportion as the applause of the Orti Esperidi gained ground, the curiosity of people became strongly excited by the question who was the author. Some persons named one, and some another: but Naples not affording, it was thought, a writer of sufficient ability to produce such a piece, the Viceroy, to keep his promise with the author, encouraged the notion that it was sent from Rome. Metastasio, in the mean time, preserved a profound secrecy on the subject, and whenever it was observed to him that he was suspected of being the author, if the piece were written by any one in Naples, he repelled the assertion with great warmth and earnestness.

Inquiry was thus completely at a fault, and would probably have been given over, or been continued as fruitlessly as ever, but for the keenness and perseverance of the Cantatrice herself. The

manner in which she sustained the character of Venus had gained her the highest applause, and this, connected with her admiration of the drama for its own singular merits, made her determined to persevere in endeavouring to discover the name of its author. By constant inquiry, and a careful consideration of every little circumstance with which she became acquainted, Metastasio at last stood revealed as the true author, and La Bulgarelli, having made out the important secret, lost no time in publishing it to the world.

Few young authors would have displayed so much command over their vanity, as not to claim at once the splendid reputation enjoyed by this production; and fewer still, it is probable, would have felt any degree of the uneasiness experienced by him when the secret was disclosed. Supposing, however, that he was as anxious as he is represented to have been, to succeed in his profession and acquire the good graces of his master, he had ample reason to regret the circumstance, for it was no sooner known that he was the author of the play, than the stern lawyer, who had begun to treat his pupil with more suavity than at first, resumed all his former surliness of manner.

Metastasio had already submitted his feelings to

a trial sufficiently great, and his patience began gradually to lose ground when he saw the confirmed ill-will conceived against him. It can create little surprise, therefore, to find him, thus circumstanced, becoming every day more willing to listen to the soft flatteries of the accomplished singer,and less steady in his resolution to relinquish poetry for jurisprudence. It was not long, indeed, before the conversation of Bulgarelli, and the agreeable society he met at her house, were his customary resource when fatigued with his irksome employment, and this coming to the ears of Castagnola he treated his pupil with more disdain than ever. At length Bulgarelli, seeing the anxiety depicted on his countenance, and not enduring the idea that with so fine a genius he should be condemned to a mode of life so ill-adapted to his disposition, persuaded him to resolve upon leaving the advocate's, and taking up his residence in her house. For some time Metastasio was kept from following this counsel by the natural timidity of his disposition, and it would be well if we could add by his prudence and morality. But the temptation, all things considered, was strong, and La Bulgarelli having rendered him confident that with his talents he had no reason to fear the want of immediate and con-

stant patronage, he yielded to her persuasions, and immediately prepared to quit the house of Castagnola. Before, however, taking this last step, it was necessary that he should explain his intentions, and it was with a trembling heart and a carefully prepared apology that he awaited the final interview with his master. The meeting soon took place, and Metastasio began his speech, but he had hardly uttered the first two or three words when Castagnola abruptly turned his back on him, and left the room without uttering a syllable.

In the house of Bulgarelli he found ample leisure to cultivate his art, which was henceforth to be both his occupation and support. In choosing his subjects, and even in his manner of treating them, he found the singer a most judicious adviser; while among the distinguished men who visited her mansion, was the celebrated musician, Il Porpora, from whom he derived instruction in the science of harmony. Soon after taking up his residence with Marianna, the Carnival of 1724 was near at hand, and he was anxious, for the sake both of the actress and himself, to produce another play which might bring them at least as much reputation as they had acquired by the former piece. After having consulted with his gentle critic respecting the subject,

he fixed on the loves of Dido and Æneas, and at its representation, during the Carnival, it was received with the same applause as the Orti Esperidi.

Marianna was engaged, after finishing her stated period at Naples, to proceed to Rome. Metastasio had hitherto felt little inclination, except from the affection he bore his parents, to revisit his native place; but the persuasions of his mistress, added to the arguments derived from filial regard, overcame his repugnance to settle himself again in a place where he had found so few real friends, and had laid the foundation of so much regret.

On the arrival of Metastasio and Marianna at Rome, having previously visited Venice, where he wrote his "Siroe," they took up their residence in the house of his father; and this union of the two families was followed by the most perfect and uninterrupted cordiality of feeling. The poet, tranquilly settled in the midst of his friends, produced successively "Il Catone," "L' Ezio," and the "Semiramide," "L'Alessandro nella Indie," "L' Artaserse," and "La Contesa de' Numi." Marianna, in the mean time, retired from the stage, and thenceforth devoted all her time to the domestic cares of the family, and in studying with Metastasio to

discover the best methods for perfecting him in that art, by his skill in which he had already acquired such an extensive reputation.

He thus continued to pass his time, acquiring, every drama he produced, some addition to his fame, till the year 1729, when he received a letter from Prince Pius of Savoy, inviting him, in the name of the Emperor, to the Court of Vienna. The celebrated Apostolo Zeno, one of the most learned men Italy has produced, and who was in his time as famous as a poet as he still is as a literary historian and critic, had been for some years the Poet Laureat of the Austrian court. At that period dramatic poetry had made little progress either in Italy or Germany, being treated, on the one hand, by scholars with too strict a regard to classical models, and by the populace, on the other, with too great an attention to the mere shows and scenery with which it was accompanied. It was on this account that the various princes who professed a fondness for the drama vied with each other in the splendour of the representations, while no money was spared to erect theatres on the most costly plans. So necessary was it thought to accompany the representation of a play with this extraneous pomp, that to bring out a new piece

was esteemed an affair of great importance; and it was considered a princely act of liberality for a sovereign, or an academy, or other public body, to take upon themselves the charge of giving it to the public with befitting accompaniments.

There were several previous indications of a wish on the part of dramatic writers to bring in the aid of music to keep up the life and spirit of the play; but the first author who attempted seriously to blend poetry and music in this intimate union was Ottavio Rinuccini, who began the custom at the latter end of the sixteenth century. His "Dafne," "Euridice," and "Arianna," were highly applauded on their first appearance, and the most distinguished musicians of the age vied with each other in striving to compose the most attractive melodies for the different scenes. It was in preparing to compose an accompaniment for one of Rinuccini's plays that Giulio Caccini, it is said, invented or restored the recitative, which speedily became popular throughout Italy, and was subsequently adopted by the musicians of France and Spain. Rinuccini visited the former country himself, and is supposed to have led a life of gaiety and dissipation till he returned to Italy, where he died in 1621, leaving Zeno to continue and

Metastasio to perfect the system he had commenced. Zeno wrote not less than sixty operas, the best and most successful of which, it is observed by M. Sismondi,* were imitated from the French, the plot, characters, and instances of his "Iphigenia," for example, being all adopted from Racine. Zeno was born to be a scholar and historian rather than a poet, and his dramas are in one respect too classical, and in another too extravagant to be natural; but Zeno possessed the undisputed pre-eminence as a poet at the Imperial Court, particularly devoted, at the period of which we are speaking, to dramatic amusements; and such was the estimation in which he was held by the Emperor, that before the latter invited Metastasio to his Court he consulted the feelings of his Laureat on the subject. Zeno, with great liberality and good taste, expressed the highest esteem for Metastasio, calling him the first dramatic poet of the age, and warmly seconding the Emperor's proposal to invite him to Vienna.

It was not without many feelings of sorrow that Metastasio bade adieu to his home, where he had lately spent his time in the enjoyment of so much domestic happiness and quiet. Abundance of tears

* Lit. of the South.

were shed when the day arrived for his quitting his relatives and Marianna; but the wishes of the Emperor, the promise of a yearly stipend of four thousand florins, and the prospect of still greater advantages, were not to be neglected, and resisting his natural inclination to remain at home he set out for Vienna in the month of April 1730, in the company of Niccolò Martinez, an officer of the apostolic embassy.

His reception at Court was highly flattering, and after having been introduced to the Prince Pius and other great personages, he was allowed a private audience of his Majesty. He has left an account of this interview in a letter to one of his friends, dated July 25, 1730. After mentioning his having dined with the Prince on the day the audience took place, and proceeded at three o'clock in the afternoon to the Emperor's apartment, he continues, "The gentleman who introduced me left me at the door of the chamber in which his Majesty was standing near a table, with his hat on, and looking very grave and thoughtful. I confess, that, well prepared as I was for this interview, I could not keep my mind free from agitation. It started into my thoughts that I was in the presence of the greatest man in the world, and that it was my

place to speak first; a circumstance which did not at all contribute to calm my feelings. I, however, made the three prescribed reverences, one on entering the door, another in the middle of the apartment, and the last as I approached his Majesty; I then knelt with one knee on the floor, but he most graciously and with great haste commanded me to rise, repeating the word, 'Rise! rise!' I then addressed him in these words, but not, I believe, with a very firm voice:—'I know not whether my happiness or my confusion be the greater at thus finding myself at the feet of your Imperial Majesty. From the first days of my life I have desired this event, and now I not only find myself in the presence of the greatest monarch in the world, but in the glorious character of one of his servants. I know what obligations this honour imposes on me; I know the weakness of my ability; and if I could become a Homer by shedding the greatest portion of my blood, I should not hesitate to pay the price. But I shall struggle to supply, in the best manner I am able, the defect in my powers by not sparing either fatigue or attention in the service of your Majesty. I know, also, that however great my imperfections may be, they will always be inferior to the infinite clemency of your Majesty; and I hope

that being in the character of Imperial poet will communicate to me that ability which I cannot hope for from natural talent.' As I continued to speak, I saw the countenance of my august patron assume a milder aspect, and he at length pleasantly answered,—'I was already persuaded of your ability, but now I am convinced of your good manners, and I have no doubt you will content me in all those things which pertain to the Imperial service, as much as you oblige me to be contented with you yourself.' He here paused to learn if I had any thing farther to desire, when, according to the instructions I had received, I begged permission to kiss his hand, on which he extended it towards me with a smile and shook mine. Consoled by this demonstration of regard, I pressed the Imperial hand between both mine, and gave it a kiss so sonorous that his most gracious Majesty might see clearly enough that it came from the heart. I have written all this minutely, because your curiosity on the subject is natural."

Metastasio was not inattentive to the assurances he had given the Emperor, and the numerous dramas he composed clearly attest both the fertility of his genius and his industry. The first piece he produced at Vienna was the oratorio of "Elena al

Calvario," and this was quickly followed by the "Adriano," a melodrama, in which he is said to have commenced his second style, "giving the greatest perfection to the language, and exhibiting more precision and care in the dialogues, a more subdued tone in the narrations, and greater freedom, delicacy, vigour, and effect in the Arie, thereby rendering his style unique and enchanting, and of such a character, that many poets have in vain presumed to imitate it, which, indeed, the experience of an age has shown it impossible to do."* Various other pieces followed close upon the Adriano, and he had the good fortune to please his patron in all. The "Demetrio" produced a sensation on the public mind which had, perhaps, never before been experienced at a dramatic representation, and the poet thus enjoyed the two most powerful encouragements to labour that it was possible for him to receive, the bountiful rewards of a liberal patron, and the applauses of the world at large.

The greatest hindrance Metastasio appears to have experienced in this brilliant period of his career, was from the want or difficulty of finding subjects, in reference to which he thus expresses himself, in a letter to Marianna, dated July 4th,

* Francesco Reina.

1782. "Will you suggest a subject for the opera I am about to write? Yes, or no? I am in an agony of doubt. Oh, do not laugh at me and say that the evil is in the blood, for the alternation of a subject will react on the agitation and the uncertainty. I am so circumstanced that I must at once determine, and there is no possibility of avoiding the necessity. If this were not the case I should keep doubting till the day of judgement and be in doubt still. Read the third scene of the third act of my Adriano: observe the character which the Emperor draws of himself, and you will see mine. You may thence learn that I know myself, though I am unable to correct myself. The perpetual indigence to a vice which torments me without giving pleasure to any one else, and which I am so conscious of without being able to renounce it, often leads me to reflect on the tyranny which the body exercises over the mind. If when I consume rationally, and reflect wisely, my mind is convinced that the excess of deliberation is inconvenient, tormenting, useless, and an hindrance to work, why cannot I divest myself of it? why cannot I obey the resolutions so often taken? The consequence is clear, —it is because the mechanical constitution of this so imperfect habitation, makes it procure things

with the colour they take by the way before reaching it, as the rays of the sun appear to our eyes now yellow, now green, now red, according to the colour of the glass or web through which they pass to illuminate the place where we happen to be. It is thence sufficiently clear that men, for the most part, work less by reason than by mechanical impulse, ingeniously adapting their reason to their work, instead of working according to the tenor of their reason, from which it results, that he who has most ingenuity seems to operate with the greatest reason. Were it not thus, all those who reason well would act well, whereas we too frequently see that the contrary is the case. Who ever examined the nature of virtue better than Aristotle, and who was ever more ungrateful than he? Who ever taught men to despise death better than Seneca, and who ever feared it more? Who ever delivered finer maxims of economy than our Paolo Doria, and who did ever consume his patrimony more miserably? In a word, discourse is correct, and has firm roots, but we care not to see the branches, because they spread too wide.

"Do not be annoyed if I act the philosopher with you; you know I have no one else with whom I can do so, and this doing it by letter, recalls those many

happy hours we passed together in discourse of this kind. Oh, how much matter have I collected for it, from experience in the world! We will talk together some day, if no unlucky freak of fortune ruffle the thread of my honourable and fatiguing life. Take care of yourself in the mean time."

We find him, two years after, writing rather pettishly to his brother on the same subject. "If," says he, "to suggest subjects, it were only necessary to make an index of Roman heroes, you would have done for me what you ought: but we want something else than mere catalogues. An action must be found which interests; which is capable of bearing the artist's handling; which is one; which may be terminated in one day and in one place; which may command attention either by the vicissitudes of an unfortunate and innocent man, or by the fall of some wicked one, or by the delay of some desired felicity, or in a word, by the concurrence of such events as may give occasion to rouse the affections, and an opportunity of placing in its proper light some extraordinary virtue, that it may be loved, or some hurtful vice, that it may be abhorred. What have you done by mentioning Sylla, Cæsar, or Pompey? Many thanks for the gift; I know them as

well as you do, and so does every one who can read. No! you must say to me—'In the life of Sylla there is such and such an action, which I think would be fit for representation, because it interests from such a motive—because it gives room for such episodes—because it surprises from such reasons.' —There is Sylla! O heavens! would you have me write his life? There would be no want of another. With regard to persuading me to write on subjects already handled, you would have little difficulty in doing that, for I have no disinclination to it. See for example, my 'Gioas,' which is the archetype of M. Racine's, and I did not fear. Those only on which I do not willingly write are such as have been treated by Zeno. We have twice encountered each other, and there are persons who have not failed to attribute to me the weakness of having studied to do it, which never entered my thoughts. But this is not pleasant to me, as I have no wish to give occasion for feelings either of disappointment or triumph. With this single exception, there is a free field, and I have no hesitation to use my sickle, because another may have reaped there before me.—There is Sylla! O mother of God! Good health to you. Embrace our Bulgarelli."

The year 1733 was one of great exertion; but having laboured so much to the Emperor's satisfaction, he was rewarded in July by being made Treasurer of the province of Cosenza, in the kingdom of Naples, an office to be enjoyed for life, and which produced a yearly income of three hundred and fifty zecchins. But the satisfaction he experienced from this circumstance was not of long duration. In the following year, while engaged in the composition of his "Betulia Liberata," he received the distressing intelligence of Marianna's death. The loss of one who had always evinced for him so lively an attachment, who had in the first instance contributed greatly to the establishment of his reputation, and who still farther had proved her fidelity to him while dying, by leaving him the sole heir to her property,—the loss of one who had so strong a claim on his gratitude and affection could not be felt otherwise than with deep emotion, by a person of Metastasio's susceptible nature; and the letters he wrote at this period are full of expressions indicating the affliction into which he was thrown by that event. But, unfortunately, there was too great a violation of propriety, if not morality, in this connection of Metastasio's with Marianna Bulgarelli, to let us sympathize with him in the depri-

vation he suffered as we otherwise might have done. Marianna was a married woman, and he seems to have incurred great censure from his acquaintance with her, as he always cautiously opposed her wish to follow him to Vienna; had it been otherwise, or had he not himself been convinced of his error, Metastasio, it is probable, would have seen less reason to restore all her property, which she had left him, to her husband.

The Betulia Liberata is supposed to have derived its chief characteristics, that is, its energetic melancholy and impressive beauty, from the situation into which the mind of its author was thrown by the death of his mistress. The "Clemenza di Tito" was produced the same year, and both productions added considerably to his reputation, and have been generally placed among his masterpieces. Voltaire asserts that some parts of the Clemenza di Tito are equal to the best specimens of the Greek drama, and that they would have been a credit to Corneille when he did not declaim, and to Racine when he was not weak.

It would be useless in this place to give a chronological account of Metastasio's operas, so rapidly did he write, and so few are the events intervening between the composition of one drama and the pro-

duction of another. In 1736, however, he graced the nuptial banquet of Maria Teresa by the production of the "Achille in Sciro," a melo-drama of great beauty, the representation of which so delighted the Emperor, that he offered to make the author either a Count, a Baron, or a Counsellor; but Metastasio imitated the example of Aretino, and rejected the honourable offer, fearing, it may be suspected, that such an advancement in rank might tend to make him a much poorer man, without contributing to increase his fame as a poet.

We might have expected that the extraordinary success, which had now attended him for so many years, would have cured him of that habit of doubting as to what subjects he should choose, or how he should proceed with those he had, of which we have heard him complain in the letters already quoted. But we find him, after all the brilliant praises he had received, still labouring under this feeling, and as anxious as ever for the advice of his friends. It was, indeed, his invariable custom to consult some intimate acquaintance during the progress of a drama, as to his opinion of its merit or defects. When Marianna Bulgarelli was alive, it was on her he depended for the assurance he required; and even when they were separated by so many hun-

dreds of miles, he still anxiously applied to her for direction or encouragement. After her death he supplied her place in the best manner he could by his secretary, whom he obliged to remain with him in his study, and to whom he read the separate portions of the work he might be about, as they proceeded from his pen. We find him thus writing to his friend Gentili, at Rome, complaining of his feelings in this respect; "I am exceedingly happy," says he, "that you are contented with my 'Ciro,' which has cost me so much trouble, that I should merit compassion if I did not find my friends somewhat indulgent to me. I begin to feel so discontented, that I am approaching the extreme point of that feeling. My natural vice is dubiousness, and it increases with my age. Long custom has hardened me to those poetical beauties which, at other times, moved and delighted me when discovered; while I write, therefore, I believe I am always writing things worse and worse, and, if necessity did not constrain me to publish them, I should either not finish any thing, or all would remain buried. You see in what a miserable condition I am, and how I labour to render myself unhappy, though dispatching maxims of prudence in all I write. O Heavens! what power has the

machine on the spirit! This cursed 'Temistocle' is, on the very same account, my scourge. The design is great for the simplicity of the developement, and, considering the necessity of drawing every thing from the single character of the hero. I wish you to see it, that I may learn what impression it makes on you. You say nothing more to me about printing; does it not follow of course? or has the work not sufficient merit to speak of it?"

The career of Metastasio was one of singular tranquillity as well as prosperity. He had rivals and enemies, it is true, but they were all too weak to disturb his quiet for any length of time, or in any material degree. From his earliest youth, on the other hand, he had been accustomed to enjoy the unchanging friendship of persons who were able to assist him, and promote his welfare, and in no one instance did the hopes he had formed of their attachment prove fallacious. Gravina continued to treat him with the affection of a parent to his latest day, and then left him provided with an ample fortune. Marianna Bulgarelli remained attached to him with a constancy and depth of sentiment but rarely the consequence of such alliances as theirs: and in the Court of Vienna his

life was said to be "a happy progress of gracious combinations, an uninterrupted series of honours and poetic triumphs."*

The death of the Emperor Charles VI. was followed by a war, which occupied the minds of statesmen with other cares than those of providing for splendid theatrical spectacles, and gave the imperial poet time to repose from his incessant labour. A less fortunate one would have had, perhaps, to lament at the death of the Sovereign the ruin of his own prosperity, but Maria Teresa was as great an admirer of his genius as her predecessor, and was equally anxious to reward his exertions in a manner befitting their excellency. Nor was the poet ungrateful for her regard. He took an interest in the prosperity of her government, which argued something more than the pretended anxiety of a courtier. For near seven years his mind was a constant prey to distressing apprehensions lest her measures might not be attended with success; and he at length became the victim of a nervous disorder, which at intervals entirely prevented his attending to composition. But, so unfortunate are Princes, that it is very rarely we can find instances of attachment

* Elogio Accademico, Roma, 1782.

to them entirely free from suspicious circumstances; and thus, in the same page which mentions Metastasio's distress at the posture of public affairs, we have to record that the Empress, in testimony of her admiration for his compositions, addressed him three different times, in letters written by herself, and two of which contained promises of large rewards. The dates of these epistles are 1766, in which year our poet wrote "I Voti Publici," stanzas suggested by the death of the Emperor Francis I.; 1767, in which he celebrated the recovery of the Empress from the small-pox, in a poem entitled "La Pubblica Felicità," and 1776, when his "Ode sulla Villa di Schönbrun" appeared.

The death of Maria Teresa left him once more exposed to the caprice of a new patron: but Joseph II. was too wise and amiable a prince not to estimate men of genius as he ought; and, had a less accomplished monarch ascended the throne, Metastasio was grown so old in the service of the Court, the celebrity of his dramas had contributed so greatly to its glory, and his name was so closely associated in the minds of the Austrians with the recollection of many years of splendour, that he possessed a sort of literary sovereignty among them,

which few possessors of the Imperial crown would have ventured to attack.

Immediately, therefore, taken under the protection of Joseph, he could boast the rare felicity of having been the favourite of three successive monarchs, and of having passed fifty years in the enjoyment of Imperial patronage, by which he was rendered, says one of his eulogists, "the most brilliant, and at the same time the wealthiest poet, perhaps, of which the annals of the art, so sterile in itself, so subject to perplexing changes, and for the most part so little appreciated, can boast."

The prosperity which he thus enjoyed he was careful not to counteract by any indiscretion of his own. He was by nature hospitable, and fond of communicating with persons of taste and ability; there were few strangers, consequently, either from Italy or other countries, who were not sure to find an hospitable entertainment at Metastasio's table. By this means his reputation became spread abroad, and the envy of many of his own countrymen had a powerful barrier opposed to it in the recollection of his kind and urbane measures. His conduct also in respect to those who consulted him on their compositions, a very numerous class of personages, was marked with all the discretion

and caution of a man who had passed the greater part of his life at court. Instead of returning the manuscripts with a series of severe remarks, which, he conjectured, might do no good to the author, but excite against him, by degrees, a host of enemies, he generally contrived to frame his answers in such a manner as to avoid offending the vanity of the authors. In the case of his intimate friend Calsabigi he acted differently, and was hated in consequence.

By these means, and by the most careful attention to the wishes of his master, Metastasio secured to himself that tranquillity of which he was so desirous, at the same time that he was accumulating considerable wealth, and advancing to the highest honours the poet of a court can enjoy. His house was the resort of all the principal literary men of Vienna, and his evenings were usually spent in the company of a few select friends, with whom he delighted to read the classics, commenting on their beauties, and illustrating their difficulties by the varied erudition which he and his companions possessed.

This easy and unruffled course of life made few ravages on the frame or constitution of the poet; and at the age of eighty-four he was still able to

enjoy public spectacles, and to feel an interest in them, which bespeaks a mind and an imagination still active and lively. But to his desire of witnessing a grand procession, made in order to honour the arrival of Pope Pius VI. at Vienna, he owed his death. It was the severest season of the year when the procession took place, but Metastasio would not leave the window from which he witnessed the spectacle till he had satiated his curiosity, and the consequence was that he caught a violent cold, which speedily brought on a fever, against which his strength was insufficient to hold out. He died on the evening of the 12th of April, 1782, leaving a fortune of 130,000 florins, acquired solely by the exercise of his genius, and the greater part of which he bequeathed to the family of Martiz, whom he tenderly esteemed, and whose house he had made his home.

Metastasio had expected his death without terror, and the mild and amiable character for which he was distinguished secured him the friendly regrets of his contemporaries. He had never, it is said, envied the fame of others, but had always taken pleasure in placing the merits of those with whom he might happen to be connected in the most favourable light. His conversation was often en-

livened with wit, but he never permitted ill-nature to point the dart; and the Abate Giulio Cordara, in concluding his eulogy, observes, that he was so exact in performing the duties of religion, that it may be hoped that he not only exists in the memory of men, but enjoys a much better life in a blessed eternity.* In his habits of living he was remarkable for regularity, apportioning the different parts of the day to particular objects, and never allowing any circumstance that could be avoided to interfere with his regulations. He considered that this was necessary to the successful prosecution of his labours, and that unremitted study of his favourite authors, to the perfect acquaintance with whose works the beauties of his own were in no slight degree to be attributed. Homer he read with so much care, as to be able to repeat his most brilliant passages from memory: but Ovid was his principal favourite, and many traces of his partiality for that poet are to be discovered in several of his dramas. That he studied Virgil and Horace with little less enthusiasm is evidenced in the same manner; while of the latter he became a careful commentator and translator, rendering the "Ars Poetica" and one or two of the "Epistles" into Italian, accompanying the version with numerous

* Discorso, Alessandria, 1782.

notes. He pursued the same plan with Greek tragedies and comedies. Of the poets of his own country he was an equally attentive reader; and among them Tasso and Marini are said to have been his favourites. It always filled him with delight to hear passages read to him from the Gerusalemme, in doing which he was seen to change colour, and would continually request that certain portions might be repeated. Of the "Adonis" of Marini, he is also said to have been so fond, that he always read some part of it previous to his sitting down to write.* On being asked which he preferred, Tasso or Ariosto, he hesitated for some time to give an answer; but, being pressed, he replied, that, to his taste, the majesty and regularity of the Gerusalemme were so agreeable, that he must decide in favour of its author.

His letter on this subject to Diodati is interesting as helping us to learn how his early literary opinions were formed. "When I was born into the world of letters," says he, "I found it divided into two parties. That illustrious circle in which it was my good fortune to be placed, followed the Ferrarese Homer, and with all the fervour which usually distinguishes such controversies. To pro-

* Bertola, Osservazione sopra Metastasio.

mote my poetic inclination, my masters proposed to me the reading and study of Ariosto, considering the happy liberty of that poet much better adapted to enrich my mind than the servile regularity, as they called it, of his rival. Their authority convinced me, and the infinite merit of the writer occupied me so much from that time, that not being able to satiate myself with reading him, I committed a great part to memory, but arrived, alas! at that degree of temerity, that I dared to suppose, that Ariosto might have a rival, and that he was not impeccable. There were, in the mean time, not wanting persons who, to seduce me, kept reciting from time to time some of the finest passages of the Gerusalemme Liberata, at which I felt myself very greatly delighted. I, however, remained faithful to my party, and detested my complacency as one of those sinful inclinations of our corrupt nature which it is our duty to correct; and in this opinion I continued through all those years in which our judgment is merely an imitation of that of others. But as soon as I could combine ideas for myself, and weigh them in their proper balance, more through weariness and from a desire of variety than for the pleasure or profit I promised myself, I read the 'Goffredo.' Now it

is impossible for me to describe the strange revolution which that reading produced in my mind. The spectacle that I saw, as in a picture, presented to me one grand and single action, lucidly set forth, skilfully conducted, and perfectly complete. The variety of so many incidents which enrich without multiplying it; the charm of a style always limpid, always sonorous, and fitted to invest the humblest and most common objects with its own nobility; the vigorous colouring with which the author illustrates and describes; the seductive perspicuity with which he narrates and persuades; the characters so true and constant; the connexion of ideas, the learning, the judgment, and above all, the prodigious strength of genius, which, instead of growing weaker, as is commonly the case, becomes greater and greater to the very last line—all these circumstances filled me with a delight till then unknown, with a respectful admiration, a lively remorse at my long injustice, and an implacable anger against those who believed Ariosto to be equal to Torquato. It is true that I can see some signs of our imperfect humanity in this author, but who is exempt from it? His great predecessor perhaps? The labour of Tasso, which is sometimes too apparent, displeases us, but the

too frequent negligence of Ariosto is far from satisfying us. If we would willingly clear the one of some conceits which are unworthy of so elevated a mind, we would not willingly leave remaining the scurrility in the other so unbecoming a refined poet; and if we should have preferred finding the amatory passages in the 'Goffredo' less rhetorical, we should be glad to find them in the 'Furioso' less natural. But 'Opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum,'—We may sometimes sleep over a long work, and it would be a malignant, pedantic vanity to labour at finding out the few little spots which appear in two such splendid luminaries, which result either from carelessness, or which the weakness of our nature prevents us from avoiding.

"But all this, you will say, is no answer to the question,—which of the two poems I prefer? I have already, my most revered Signor Diodati, declared my just repugnance to so bold a decision, but to obey you in the manner that best becomes me, I have declared instead the sentiments which the two divine poets severally create in my mind. If all this be not sufficient, behold, yet farther, the disposition in which I find myself after having examined my mind anew. Should it please our good father Apollo to offer to make me a great poet,

in order to show his power, but as a condition command me to declare freely which of the two celebrated poems I would have my productions resemble, I should most certainly hesitate before I made the selection, but my, perhaps excessive, partiality for order, exactness and system, would, I feel, incline me to the 'Goffredo.'"

Metastasio's claims to the celebrity he enjoys are of that indisputable nature which always, more or less, belongs to those which are founded on originality. He created by his genius a new era in the literature of Italy, and one which, had he been followed by men whose abilities were at all comparable to his own, would have merited the praises of those who now limit them to the works he himself produced. It is not difficult to imagine how great must have been the excitement occasioned by his operas, when they were first represented. Dramatic poetry had never yet flourished in Italy: there was too great a want of boldness in the writers, and of freedom and spirit among the people for its rise, till some surpassing, —some more than ordinarily vigorous genius should spring up, and burst through the bonds of conventional feeling, a corrupted taste, and a degrading tyranny at the same instant. Metastasio

was not a genius of this order, or his personal character, which constitutes the body as it were through which genius operates, would not suffer him to attempt such an object. But if he wanted that nervousness and freedom of spirit so essential to a dramatic writer of the highest class, he possessed all the other requisites of a dramatist—pure moral feeling, a quick conception of what is noblest in human character, and a thorough understanding of the motives which impel the basest to action; he had a command over his language which enabled him to paint the various passions in the most appropriate colours; he knew by the constant exercise of that internal sight which seems peculiar to dramatic genius, what conceptions of his mind could be properly made visible to the outward eye, and under what forms they should appear; his own heart was keenly susceptible of those emotions which it is the province of the drama to excite; he was passionately fond of all the brilliant accompaniments which characterised the scenic representations of his age and country; and, lastly, he was profoundly versed in the study of the greatest dramatic authors of antiquity, and of the Corneilles and the Racines of modern times.

It was with these advantages of talent and education that he undertook to obey the commands of the Viceroy of Naples, and it is not impossible that the particular circumstances under which he had to make the first trial of his genius, tended to confine it to that class of composition on which he continued to expend its highest energies. The popular dramas of the age were little superior, in their intellectual character, to the public shows and processions which amused the people in the streets; their principal interest, as has been said, was dependant on the music and scenery, and the author who could bring the gayest pageants into his piece, seems to have stood the best chance of amusing his audience. The genius of Metastasio disdained to imitate the puerile and insipid writers who had preceded him, but he was obliged to obey the long-formed taste of the public, and hence he produced a species of drama which combined all that could charm and fascinate the senses with as much of intellectual power and beauty as the minds of his audience were capable of comprehending. Music and scenery still exercised their magic influence, but poetry asserted its supremacy; the senses were still lulled into rapture by exquisite harmony and gorgeous displays, but the passions

were roused, and pity and terror kept awake to distinct objects of thought by the force of language. His productions, therefore, for a people intellectually and morally constituted like his audience, were perfect; and the influence they exercised at Naples, they exercised at Rome, and at Vienna, and will exercise wherever the character of the court or people may be compounded of similar attributes to that of the Neapolitan when he wrote.

It is in the same manner we may account for that mixture of love adventures and amatory complaints in almost all the dramas of this great author, with representations of the noblest characters, and the most exalted and animating moral sentiments. He owed a great part of his original success to that mixture; and success such as he enjoyed was sufficient with a man of Metastasio's character to make him contented to pursue the plan on which he began to write. So strikingly was the susceptibility of the public displayed in this respect, that at the performance of his Dido at Rome, the applause of the audience at the speech of the Queen, "Son regina, e sono amante," was so violent, that it seemed as if the theatre was shaken from its foundations, and the Abate Cordara

remarks that his ecclesiastical habit not suffering him to go to the theatre, he could catch, as it were, the rumour from his cell, for nothing was talked of in Rome for several days but that drama.

But there exists a considerable difference in the style of some of his pieces from that of others. In his earlier ones he confessed that he had failed in keeping a proper restraint on the freedom of his Muse, and some years after their composition he made numerous alterations in the Didone, Adriano, Catone, and others. The opinions of his critics upon his various productions often differ, but in speaking of them himself, he was accustomed to say that if he could save but one of his operas, it should be the Attilio Regolo.

Metastasio, some years before his death, had the sorrow of seeing the opera fast declining from the state of perfection to which he had raised it. It was no inferior genius, indeed, to his own, that could have preserved it in its original beauty. One shade more of splendour in the spectacle, and the drama was lost:—one degree less of fervour and sweetness in the poetry, and the music became triumphant. Metastasio possessed in himself a union of qualities for succeeding in his object, for he was a profound musician as well as

a poet, and he thus understood almost intuitively how the beautiful arts, from the union of which the opera springs, might be united without either of them eclipsing the other. The writers who succeeded him possessed neither his power nor his judgment, and the nature of the opera offers constant temptations to bad taste. It was soon found that the absurdest inventions, the weakest poetry, the most unnatural sentiments, might be passed off with the assistance of fine music, and even gain applause. This discovery was not long in producing the consequences which might be expected, and the Italian dramatic Muse again sunk to the earth, like a bird that had had only sufficient strength to take one short and rapid flight into its native element.

APOSTOLO ZENO, FILICAIA, &c.

Among the contemporaries of Metastasio, Apostolo Zeno merits the first rank, as well on account of the conspicuous station he occupied among the poets of his age, as of the extensive erudition for which he was remarkable, and which so frequently brings his name before the student of lite-

rary history. This learned man was born at Venice, December 3, 1668. His father, who was a physician of note, died while he was still a child, and left him and his brother Nicolaus, to the care of their mother, who shortly after married a nobleman named Antonio Cornelio. The two brothers were placed at an early age under the best masters; but Zeno speedily distinguished himself by the superiority of his intellect and his greater application. In 1684, he published some short Latin poems on passing public events, and this, his first appearance as an author, was sufficiently encouraging to induce him to proceed. His next production was a translation into Italian verse of the Satires of Persius, and by several minor compositions. After having acquired considerable notice by these poems, and particularly by some melodramas which introduced him to the patronage of the Duke of Modena, he began to devote himself to the study of history and biography, and the preparation he made for writing the lives of the celebrated poets of his country, affords a strong testimony to his care and diligence; but the extent of the work, like most of those which he wrote on historical subjects, prevented his bringing it to a conclusion, and thus the world has been deprived of some of the most

valuable fruits of his erudition and application. One of his numerous undertakings, however, though of a different kind, he brought to a successful termination in 1691. This was an abridgment of the Dictionary della Crusca, a work which was received by his countrymen with great applause, and which evinced the perfect knowledge he possessed of the niceties of his language. The "Galleria di Minerva" afforded another instance of his zeal for the interests of literature; and still more so, the "Giornale de' Letterati d' Italia," a work of the same kind as the Galleria, but more extensive, and fuller of important papers, contributed to it by the most eminent men of the age. The "Ephemerides," a periodical of a similar character also started by him, numbered among its contributors Salvini, the celebrated Scipione Maffei, and the great historian Muratori. Zeno had to endure many unpleasant circumstances while editing this work; and his friendship with Maffei was considerably diminished by his discovering that that writer, too eager, it has been observed, of reputation, had published one of the papers in the Giornale, in a separate work of his own.

His appointment to a public situation hindered for a time his prosecution of these various literary

pursuits; but in 1718 the success of his operas had raised his reputation so high, that he received an invitation from the Emperor of Austria to proceed to Vienna. He was for some time undetermined as to whether he should accept this honour, but having lost his wife, and there being no weighty or pressing cause to hinder his departure, he at last decided upon leaving Italy for the Court of Vienna. He does not seem to have set out in good spirits, and before he reached the place of his destination he had the misfortune to break his leg, which confined him several weeks on the road. His mind, in the mean time, was agitated by a hundred fears lest his money should not be sufficient to carry him to the end of the journey, and when he arrived at Vienna, he terrified himself with the apprehensions that he might after all be left in neglect, and, wanting both money and friends, be reduced to extreme distress. His doubts, however, proved false, and he had every reason to be satisfied with the treatment he received from the Emperor, and the great men about Court. The first drama he produced was the "Iphigenia," which was followed by the "Papirius," at the representation of which the Emperor was so gratified that he said he had

never seen a piece which had given him so much pleasure.

But it was not only as a poet that Zeno exercised his abilities at Vienna. His reputation as an historian acquired him the honour of being appointed Historiographer to the Emperor, and his fondness for investigation induced him to commence a work on the same plan as the celebrated history of Muratori. On learning, however, that his former associate was engaged in the same design, he generously ceased from his intentions, and offered the annalist the advantage of both his materials and advice.

After spending eleven years at Vienna, he began to feel an unconquerable desire to return to his native country; and as Metastasio had already proved his ability to supply the place he had occupied, he obtained permission to retire without much difficulty, the Emperor securing to him his yearly stipend on the flattering condition that he should annually furnish the Court with a sacred drama.

On his return to Venice he resumed his usual occupations, and carried on, in conjunction with his brother, the publication of the "Ephemerides," which continued to appear till the death of

his fellow-labourer, after which it gradually ceased, the age and melancholy of Apostolo incapacitating him from sustaining the exertion it demanded. He still, however, employed himself on subjects connected with history, both civil and literary. His collection of medals was one of the finest in Europe, and his extensive acquaintance with the minutest portions of literary history is evidenced by his notes to Fontanini's "Eloquenzia Italiana," a work to which he had contributed at its first appearance some valuable hints, which the author had not had sufficient generosity to acknowledge, but expressed great indignation at the advice with which Zeno had answered his letter desiring him to give it.

The Emperor's command, which had imposed upon him the necessity of continuing to write a sacred drama annually, was not neglected; and he was accustomed to express himself as so much more satisfied with his pieces of a religious character than he was with those of a different kind, that he said he would willingly see all but his sacred dramas perish, while of those he preferred the Gerusalemme to all the rest, "because," he observed, "it was nearly all written at the foot of the cross on which Christ lay crucified."

Zeno lived to his eighty-first year, and left behind him one of the best and brightest characters that can be found attached to a name of celebrity. His perfect freedom from selfishness, and from the envy which so frequently infects the literary character—his fervent piety, the morality of his actions, and the purity and careful veracity of his conversation, were all so many steps by which he raised himself above the level of his contemporaries in moral worth, as by his learning and application he rose above them in literature. The amiable and also virtuous Metastasio bore testimony to the merits of his predecessor, and honoured him both as a man and a poet.

Vicentio Filicaia was born at Florence, in the month of December 1642:* "a most gloomy period," says Fabroni, "and one which proved almost fatal to elegant literature, such was the error and thick darkness which overspread the minds of those who desired to cultivate the Muses." The family of our poet, on both the father's and the mother's side, was ancient and noble; and at an early age he was entered at the Jesuits' College, where he acquired the foundation of a learned education, and was then sent to Pisa to complete his studies and accomplish

* Fabroni, Vitæ Ital. 1781.

himself in the knowledge of jurisprudence. But poetry, the destined rival of that science with most young men like Filicaia, drew him repeatedly from his proper pursuits, and having fallen desperately in love with a young lady who resided near his lodgings, his passion for versifying grew every day stronger. The object of his affections died soon after he became acquainted with her; and the time he had before occupied with seeking to gain her affections, he now felt it a sort of duty to employ in lamenting her early death, till at length growing weary of his amatory strains he flung all his compositions into the fire, and took a solemn oath never more to write poetry except on sacred or heroic subjects. Fortunately for his reputation he kept his word, and his odes breathe the truest spirit of the lyric Muse. His fame was speedily and extensively spread abroad, and Christina Queen of Sweden became one of his warmest admirers, and encouraged him to exercise his genius with the most flattering marks of esteem and patronage. So munificent were the gifts he received from her hands, that he was accustomed to say, that whenever he looked either at his home, his children, or his wife, he was reminded of some favour bestowed on him by the Queen.

At the death of Christina, Filicaia found himself involved in pecuniary difficulties, which greatly afflicted his spirits; and to this source of uneasiness was added the deeper distress he suffered about the same period from the loss of his son, a youth of great promise. He was, however, shortly relieved from his anxiety respecting the situation of his affairs by the liberality of Cosmo III., who gave him the command of Volterra, in the execution of which office he conducted himself with so much urbanity and attention to his duties that he gained the affections of all around him.

Thus restored to the enjoyment of tranquillity, and possessing an income sufficient for his support and that of his family, Filicaia resumed his literary labours with great ardour, and devoted his attention especially to the composition of Latin poetry, the specimens he produced of which were highly praised, and acquired so much popularity that the English Ambassador at the Court of Florence sent copies of the most admired to England, where they met with the most extravagant applause from Lord Somers, and several other noblemen. The verses, however, which obtained these praises were sufficiently complimentary to English feelings; and Fabroni sarcastically observes, "Non poterant non

esse acceptissima populo, propriorum meritorum laudatori superbo,"—they could not be otherwise than most acceptable to a people who proudly laud their own merits.

The inhabitants of Volterra, who regarded him as a parent, were anxious to retain him among them, but Cosmo thought proper to remove him to Pisa in the year 1700. He continued there about two years, at the end of which period he returned to Florence, much improved in his circumstances by the liberal conduct of the Duke. He died in the year 1707.

Alexander Guidi, may here also be mentioned as one of the poets who stand forth from the crowd of writers who did so little in this age to render it one of importance in the history of Italian literature. He was born at Pavia, in June 1650, and studied with success at Parma, where he published a collection of his Italian poetry in the year 1681. He also brought out the same year his melodrama entitled " Amalasunta," which was performed, or rather sung in the College of Music. Soon after this, he went to Rome, and obtained the favourable notice of Queen Christina and other powerful personages. The former, discovering the excellence of his genius the more she conversed with him,

requested the Duke of Parma, in whose employ the poet had been for several years, to allow him to enter her service: the request was granted, and Guidi took up his residence at Rome in May 1685. The learned men with whom he now became acquainted, strongly advised him to avoid, by every means in his power, the imitation of contemporary writers, and to endeavour to acquire a pure style by the study of the Latin and Greek classics, and of Petrarch and Chiabrera. A striking improvement was visible in all he wrote after this; and to his diligent attention to the judicious remarks of his friendly critics he owes the present existence of his name among the poets of Italy. His fable of "Endymion," written at the desire of the Queen, obtained him the same praise as his smaller pieces of poetry, and Gravina thought it of sufficient worth to illustrate it with a commentary, while in speaking of the other productions of the author to Scipio Maffei, he observed that he was the first in that age who dared to reject the corrupt and florid language of modern poetry for the simplicity and chasteness of the classics, and to write with a proper elevation of spirit and newness of colouring instead of being a servile imitator. Guidi became more ambitious as he advanced in years, and composed

a tragedy named "Sophonisba," hoping, says Fabroni, to rival Trissino and Corneille; but he wholly failed in his expectations; he wanted the power of varied expression, and the uniform style in which all the characters spoke disgusted whoever read it. He next commenced the translation of some homilies into verse, induced to undertake the task at the persuasion of his friend Crescimbeni; but urgent affairs obliged him to leave Rome, and he did not proceed farther than the commencement. Having, however, fulfilled the object of his journey which, it appears, was to advocate the cause of his native place against some oppressive tax, he returned, crowned with the blessings of his fellow-citizens, to Rome, and immediately determined to resume the translation of the homilies, by which he hoped to acquire the favour of the new Pope, Clement XI. To proceed with his work the more effectually, he resolved on retiring into the country for a time; but amusing himself as he went with what he had done of the translation, he found parts of it so bad that he was thrown into the greatest state of agitation. The next morning, June 12, 1712, having passed the night on the road, he reached Frascati, his place of destination, still violently oppressed in

spirit, and in a few hours after his arrival, he was seized with apoplexy and expired.

The life of Carlo Innocenza Frugoni was one of constant change, but furnished few incidents to reward the pains of the biographer. He was born of an ancient and noble family, at Genoa, in November 1692; and, being a younger son, was persuaded by his relatives in so pressing a manner to become a monk, that their advice almost amounted to a command. In obedience, however, to their directions he, at fifteen, entered the congregation of Somasca, and the next year commenced his noviciate, which being completed, he, the May following, professed. The strong argument which induced him to become so willingly the victim of his friends' persuasions, was his passionate love of study; and, by the time he was four-and-twenty, he was deemed sufficiently accomplished in elegant literature to be appointed to the Professorship of Rhetoric in the public school of Brescia. While there, he established an Academy, or "Colonia Cenomana," and, as his Arcadian name, assumed the appellation of "Cornate." In 1717 he went to Rome, and taught rhetoric in the "Collegio Clementino;" while holding which situation

he became acquainted with many literary men of distinction, and also acquired notice by his own productions. He returned to Genoa in 1719, and opened a theological seminary, but was speedily obliged to leave the city on account of some verses which had given rise to aspersions against his character. He then proceeded to Bologna; and, after one or two other changes, went to Parma, where he obtained the patronage of the Duke, and, by his adaptation of the old drama "Il Trionfo di Camilla," and other pieces for the stage, succeeded in establishing himself in the Prince's favour. But his hopes of prosperity were all dissipated at the investiture and capture of the city by the Austrian army; and, though he condescended to the meanness of writing a play for the purpose of dedicating it to the conqueror, he was disregarded, and left without any prospect of recovering his pension. After, however, having suffered a variety of distresses, he had the happiness to see the Spanish Infanta take possession of the Duchy, and, by as venal a prostitution of his muse as poet ever was guilty of, he contrived to pass the remainder of his days in tolerable comfort. Like Filicaia, he was regarded with great admiration by the English; and, when he was at Venice in 1744,

Lord Holderness, the Ambassador, entertained him several months in his house. He died in December 1768.

There was little to admire in the character of Frugoni, and he was conscious of it himself, but attributed all his errors and misfortunes to the force he had suffered in being made a monk. The confinement and mode of life to which his profession subjected him, filled him, he said, with sorrow and rage; and having, after much intercession with the Pope, in which he was greatly aided by Cardinal Bentivoglio, obtained a release from his vows as a monk, and been reduced to a secular priest, he ever after professed to regard the indulgent Pontiff as the greatest benefactor he could have found.

The poetry of this author partakes of most of the vices of the age, but it evinces originality and ardour, which, if they had not been too often subjected to the venality of which he has been so justly accused, would have obtained him as much praise with posterity as he enjoyed among his contemporaries.

* Opere, Parma, 1779.

The Life of Giuseppe Parini.

Giuseppe Parini.

If it be distressing to our feelings to see a family once celebrated for its pure and well-earned nobility, degenerating in its offspring, it is equally or still more painful to discover any falling off from that elevation of sentiment and noble bearing which, at a previous period, distinguished the men devoted to study and the Muses. Others may be expected to change with the times; professions, skill in which is to be rewarded by gain, will be followed indiscriminately by the noble and the base minded; and there is nothing in the general maxims by which the different classes of society distinguish themselves that can act

as a conservative against the corruption of their sentiments: but freedom, honesty, and elevation of principle are to the poet what chastity is to women,—if he sacrifice them, his very excellence but reminds us of his dishonour; and, while we walk among the flowers which he calls up beneath our feet, we fear lest an adder is concealed there; and, when we warm with the honied draught we have drunk at his hands, we dare not be free and happy in his fellowship, lest there should be poison in the bowl. I am tempted to say that, next to the sin which an unhallowed power has sometimes committed in making the ministers of religion speak less than the truth, is that of making courtiers of poets. They are intended, by the very gifts of their nature, to keep all generous, humanizing feelings awake in natiòns — to be the coryphæi of the people when they would pay homage to what is great and dignified—to soften their bosoms when they are hardened by faction or discontent—to reprove them when they sink in worth, and are basely indifferent to the cause of virtue—duties which are but ill performed when these children of genius become victims of effeminacy, and cower beneath the wings of protectors, whom they might, per-

haps, have animated to the noblest deeds, and who would then have honoured as teachers rather than protected them as vassals. These observations have been already amply illustrated in the present work, and the literary history of Italy in the eighteenth century illustrates them still more forcibly. "Parini," observes Mr. Hobhouse, "was almost the only Italian poet of the last century who dared to conceive, and certainly he was the only one who was capable of completing the project of directing the efforts of his art towards the improvement of his fellow-citizens."

This excellent poet was born May 22nd, 1729, and the lives of few literary men present us with a more affecting picture of genius struggling with obscurity and distress, or a more animating example of independence, preserved amid all the temptations to which poverty can expose a man, and uninjured even when the pressure of great bodily infirmities would have been alleged as an excuse for yielding by any mind less nobly constituted. The parents of Parini were peasants, who possessed a very small and poor farm, on the bank of the Lake Pusiano, situated about twenty miles from Milan. Notwithstanding, however, the extreme

scantiness of his income, old Parini, observing the talents of Giuseppe, resolved upon taking him to Milan, where he placed him under the instruction of the most learned preceptors the place afforded.*

In the Academy Arcimboldi, superintended by the Barnabites, he studied the various branches of moral philosophy; but his mind was, from the earliest period of life, imbued with a strong and engrossing love of poetry, which rendered a powerful effort necessary before he could settle to any other pursuit. This effort, however, the circumstances of his parents compelled him to make soon after he entered the Academy. His father, unable to support him any longer, was obliged to find him occupation as a copyist, and looked with eager expectation for his completing his course of theology, and embracing the priesthood.†

Parini continued to pursue his studies undiscouraged, supporting himself as he best could, and occupying the few leisure hours left him in the diligent perusal of the best Latin and Italian poets, till he was near twenty-one, when he was assailed with a worse affliction than any he had to

* Francesco Reina, Opere di Parini.

† Ugoni della Let. Ital.

dread from the mere want of resources. From his birth, it appears, he had suffered considerably from a weakness in the muscles, which had not been overcome by the growth of his person, though in a great degree lost sight of from the hilarity and buoyancy of spirit for which his youth was remarkable. But at the period of which we are speaking, he was seized with a paralytic affection, which deprived him of the use of his limbs, and from which he never wholly recovered.

Thus circumstanced, he would notwithstanding have persevered in preserving himself independent; but his mother, now left a widow, wanted support, and for her, and to procure her what little comforts he could, though for nothing else, he was willing to sell his time to the wealthy people who required his attendance as a tutor to their children. He was thus enabled to support his mother, whereas before, while he gave her money to procure bread, he had to go unfed himself. In addition to his gaining this important object, by engaging in tuition, he became acquainted with the manners of the fashionable world, which he was shortly after to depict with so much skill, and was enabled, moreover, to pursue his study of the classics with

more ease and comfort, adding to the perusal of the best authors in Latin and Greek, the careful and laborious study of criticism and philosophy.

He had not long to wait, after thus accomplishing himself, for an opportunity of proving his skill and erudition. In a controversy, first with Bandiera on his work entitled "I Pregiudizj delle Umane Lettere," and next with Onofrio Branda, who had been his tutor in the Academy, he distinguished himself to the admiration of all his acquaintances; and though the latter contest was carried on with so much fury, that the tribunal of the Chancery prohibited its continuance, and Parini himself called it one of the disgraces of literature, his style was remarkable for its purity and elegance.

The confidence with which this controversy inspired him, induced him to think seriously about composing some work which might place him at once among the celebrated writers of his country. Conscious, however, of possessing a more than ordinary share of originality, he resolved upon striking out a new path for himself, and of securing, if possible, all the advantages of novelty to assist the efforts of his ability. But this was no easy task. Tragedy he rejected, though tempted to choose it

by the natural turn of his disposition, on account of political circumstances. Satire was too common, and even in the hands of Ariosto had acquired comparatively little notice; still it seemed more promising than any other branch of composition, and as he was now well acquainted with the great, and had been long a keen observer and critic of their follies, he at length determined to make them the subject of his poem.

But another difficulty presented itself before he began to put his thoughts into verse. The language of satire had from time immemorial been that of the world rather than of books, and each satirist had employed that dialect of his native tongue which was most elegant, and at the same time most familiar in its modes of expression. In almost every country of the world, the language as used among the respectable classes of the capital is the standard of propriety, and the satirist or dramatist has never to ask himself what dialect he shall choose, or how he is to make himself intelligible. But in Italy it is different, and the factions and oppressions to which it has been so long subjected, has prevented it from having a common language. Parini, however, was not to be disheartened in his design, but blending the style of the satire with that of comedy,

and carefully examining a satirical drama called "Femia," written by Martelli in blank verse, he convinced himself of the practicability of his design.

As soon as he had proceeded sufficiently far in the poem to make its object intelligible, he obtained the opinions of Passeroni, Fagliazzi, and other literary friends respecting its merit. Fagliazzi was so pleased with it, that he spoke of its excellencies to the Austrian Plenipotentiary, the Count di Firmian. On being told the nature of the work, and that it was about to be published, the Count replied, "That's very good; there is great need of it."

Encouraged by so many favourable testimonies, Parini lost no time in publishing the "Mattino," or Morning, which appeared in 1763. All Italy, it is said, was charmed with the novelty and various excellencies of this poem; and the author was eagerly pressed to finish the "Mezzogiorno," or Noon, as speedily as possible. This second part, however, did not appear till near two years after, but it was received with equal favour. Not only was the public delighted with the liveliness of the satire; but the literary men of the day saw with wondor to what perfection Parini had brought blank verse. For some time past, that species of composition had been the fashion among the poets both

good and bad, but on comparing the neat and flowing lines of Parini's poem with their own slovenly verses, many of them determined to attempt blank verse no more, having at length discovered that to vary and adjust its pauses so as to secure both variety and harmony is much more difficult than to find rhyme. Frugoni himself said on reading Parini's Mattino, that he now saw he had never known how to write blank verse, though he formerly thought himself very skilful in it. The two poets became thenceforward intimately acquainted.

The Count Firmian, who had so warmly encouraged the publication of the Mattino, was not backward in manifesting his friendship for the author after its publication. He first made him editor of the Gazette, and next, in 1769, appointed him Professor of the Belles Lettres in the Palatine School, establishing a new chair in the academy solely for that purpose, and having to encounter at the same time a most violent opposition from the Jesuits. Parini, who had been previously offered the Professorship of Eloquence in the University of Parma, but refused it, entered upon his present duties with a mind richly stored with learning, with a well exercised taste, and great natural abilities as well

as a strong inclination for the subject which he was about to treat.

His next appointment was to the Professorship of Eloquence in the Gymnasium di Brera, and during the first year he enjoyed that situation he composed the celebrated course of lectures published in his works. Being afterwards called to the chair of the fine arts, he performed his duties with the same indefatigable zeal as in his other situations. The lectures he delivered on the various subjects abovementioned were always numerously attended by both natives and foreigners, who were so deeply interested, it is said, by the noble truths which he mixed up with his literary discourses, that they admired him as an example as well as a preceptor. A still higher compliment is paid him, when M. Reina says that his country owes to Parini the preservation of good taste, and that intellectual culture which has so frequently placed a barrier to the spread of foreign corruption.

The reputation he acquired by his lectures on the fine arts, was little less extensive than that which rewarded his labours on subjects purely literary; the best artists from every part of the country came to ask his advice, and very often to obtain plans or outlines of subjects, a number of

which still exist, the production of Parini's ability. Vasari's Lives of the Painters was one of his most favourite works.

His taste for the arts and his poetic genius were both called into exercise on the arrival of the Archduke Ferdinand. Count Firmian, in order to celebrate his marriage with Maria Beatrice of Este, appointed a nuptial drama to be performed with the Ruggiero of Metastasio. Parini was accordingly directed to prepare one for the occasion, and he proved his judgment in no slight degree by the manner in which he executed his task. By all men of sense and real poetic feeling, the opera, when divested of that peculiar charm which it derives from the exquisite strains of Metastasio, was regarded as a burlesque on the genuine drama, and the powerful genius of Alfieri having already begun to excite the attention of Italy, such men as Parini would naturally feel unwilling to class themselves with the mere slaves of musicians and scene-painters. The Count, however, was not to be disobeyed, and our poet set about the opera; but he resolved to do away as much as possible with the absurdity of introducing songs into a piece where natural and human passions are to be excited by probable occurrences or represen-

tations: he therefore drew his characters and fable from the doubtful realms of fancy, and instead of historical heroes, brought gods and demi-gods on the stage. Neither Nature nor probability can be easily offended when neither the nature of the beings represented, nor their mode of action, is understood. The introduction of music and singing, consequently, when the drama is composed of such materials as these, produces no feeling of absurdity in the mind, but tends to keep it in that pleasing state of bewilderment and uncertainty, which always attend the idea that we are present among beings of a different order and nature to ourselves.

Parini succeeded in satisfying his patron, and his opera was greatly admired for the clearness and elegance of the style, the ingenuity of the plot, and the manner in which it was developed. The execution of this task was succeeded by the imposition of another, the drawing out of a plan for the decoration of a palace which the Archduke erected on the site of the old theatre, which he took down for that purpose. In performing his duty, the poet had often to contend with the Prince respecting the embellishments of the hall of audience, which the latter wished to have adorned with paintings of the Judgement of Paris, but which the poet, with far better taste and judgment,

determined to have decorated with representations of a nature better fitted to the character of the place.

But these employments of his ability were suited to his inclination, and he willingly obeyed his superiors, when their calls upon his talents might be obeyed to the advantage of his favourite arts, and consistently with his honesty and reputation. This he felt not to be case, when, on the death of Maria Theresa, he was desired by the new Società Patriotica, of which he had been chosen a member, to compose a funeral oration in praise of the deceased Empress. He had unfortunately not sufficient resolution to express his feelings at once on the subject, or he did not, perhaps, see at first, how he must compromise his private sentiments to do justice as a public eulogist. He had no sooner, however, begun to compose his oration, than he found the insuperable difficulties with which, feeling as he did, he should have to contend. In vain, therefore, did he endeavour to proceed; his inventive genius refused to assist him; he could draw no topics from the suggestions of his favourite principles which entered well into his subject, and after a useless struggle, he found himself obliged to accept the invitation of a friend to pass some time in the country, where he hoped he might be more favourably

disposed for thinking. And had it been merely from want of ability to reflect, the change of scene, and the repose he enjoyed in his retreat might have had the desired effect, but Maria Theresa's actions and principles still appeared in the same light to the free-minded patriotic poet, and every time he recollected that the Empress favoured the Inquisition, and that her boasted generosity was but a squandering of the wealth which was not her own, the pen fell from his hands; and with all the fertile wit and ready eloquence which produced the Mattino, he could find neither thoughts nor expressions to honour the memory of Metastasio's patroness.

But the agitation of mind which he suffered while attempting to execute this unprofitable task, had so serious an effect upon his nerves, that he was unable to compose himself to the performance of his usual labours, and he for some time heard the public calling on him from every quarter, to give them the succeeding parts of his popular poem, without the power to fulfil their request, or take advantage of so favourable an opportunity for promoting his reputation. "Il Vespro" and "La Notte," however, were at length resumed, and he also again turned his attention to lyrical composition, and formed the hope of being one day able to excel

the most celebrated of his countrymen in that species of poetry. "It appeared to him," says Reina, "that the rich, harmonious, and fascinating language of Italy, which in the tender and delicate forms of the original Petrarch, abounds with so much grace, had not been carried, either by Bernardo Tasso or by Chiabrera, to that degree of elegance, and grandeur of expression, which are the peculiar properties of Greek and Latin lyric poetry, and which those two excellent poets sought to imitate, but never reached the severe economy of the ancient lyric writers."*

The odes and sonnets of Parini are justly estimated by his countrymen, who rank them among the best specimens in their language of the species of composition to which they belong. But the attention of the amiable author was in the mean time forcibly attracted to the affairs of his country, and in fact of Europe. On the death of Count Firmian, he lost his best friend, and the only firm protector he had ever possessed. The freedom of his sentiments, his satires, and the inflexible severity of his manners, had, on the other hand, created him numerous enemies, and he speedily found himself on the point of being

* Vita, Opere.

reduced to the lowest condition of poverty. His reputation, the best safeguard in any country against violence, and the influence of the Counsellor Pecci, who continued his friend, alone saved him from losing the professorship, on which he wholly depended for the supply of his moderate wants.

The accession and reforms of the Emperor Joseph the Second, were hailed by Parini as greatly tending to produce that public happiness and security which it was his ardent prayer to see established throughout the world. His political sentiments being thus set at rest for a time, he devoted himself without disturbance to the duties of his professorship and other literary occupations, finding at the same time another occasion for the exercise of his taste for the fine arts, in the composition of subjects for the decoration of the new Palazzo Belgiojoso.

At the breaking out of the French revolution, his mind was again immersed in the troubled sea of politics. As a patriot he looked with deep anxiety at the progress of events which might in the end confer freedom on his own country; and as a philosopher, he could not but contemplate with the liveliest interest an occurrence which

displayed the action of those principles on society, respecting the nature and influence of which he had been speculating through a great portion of his life. Even poetry and study seem to have yielded to the exciting thoughts to which his political enthusiasm at this period gave birth. The Paris journals were read by him with an avidity which nearly cost him the sight of one of his eyes; and to the constant perusal of the public prints, he added the serious study of all the great political theories which in any way bore upon the subjects which so completely occupied his mind. We must not, however, omit to mention, as it affords an admirable trait of the purity and honesty of Parini's mind, that as a public teacher, he never allowed himself to take advantage of his influence over the youths whom he instructed, to infuse his private opinions, or convert them to espouse a cause, the merits or defects of which they were incapable of estimating for themselves.

The Austrian throne, in the mean time, was ascended by Leopold the Second, and on his passing through Milan, he performed an act of generosity which well became his imperial character. Happening to see as he was passing through one of the streets, a venerable-looking man, who, dread-

fully lame and infirm, was helping himself along with a stick, he asked one of his courtiers if he knew who it was. "It is Parini," was the reply; and the Emperor, astonished and distressed that a man of such celebrity and genius should be forced to labour in so bad a state of health through the streets on foot, immediately ordered that a larger stipend should be paid him, but to the disgrace of those whose duty it was to fulfil the royal commands, Parini was left to make the best of his crutch and narrow stipend as before.

In conformity with the wishes of the Archduchess Maria Beatrice of Este, he had, after great labour and hesitation, prepared the remaining portions of his poem for the press, and revised the part already published, when the French took possession of Milan, and he trusted that the day was arrived when a new order of things would be commenced, and a wider gate opened to literature and philosophy, at the same time that the freedom of his countrymen was secured against the farther aggressions of their ancient masters. One of the first acts, indeed, of the conqueror was to raise the poet to that station among his fellow-citizens which he so richly merited by his patriotism, his learning, and experience; but Parini, as a member of the

municipal government, was the same frank and severe-minded man as he was when satirising the effeminate nobles of Italy, and military tyrants are not more open to the counsels of philosophers and men of worth, than the Viceroys and deputies of Imperial courts. After a few weeks, therefore, of political labour as a magistrate, finding that he could do little good by the longer possession of his office, our poet resigned, and on doing so, gave all the proceeds of his magistracy to the poor of his parish, avoiding the appearance of ostentation by doing this act of beneficence secretly.

In the midst of all the factions, with their attendant consequences, which distracted Italy at this period, he lived, it is said, a life of freedom and tranquillity; but the tranquillity which Parini enjoyed when freed from public office was not the result of idleness or indifference. His anxiety for the welfare of his country and of Europe was never diminished, and he watched the rapid changes which were every day occurring, with a careful and penetrating eye. His retirement was that of a philosopher, better able to make his power felt by the secret but mighty influence of his opinions, gradually and surely diffused, than by the strength of his eloquence in the senate-

house. Of this Parini was fully aware, and in his study, conversing with his intimate friends, and by the manly and elevated tone of his lectures as a professor, he did much more towards diffusing the sentiments he admired, than he would have done, it is probable, in a political capacity. Nor did he long intermit his favourite studies while his thoughts were thus attracted to considerations of more immediate importance to mankind at large. He prepared materials for some lectures on the celebrated production of Leonardo da Vinci, the Last Supper; and his perusal of his favourite classics was continued with the same enthusiasm as in his youth. But by this incessant study, added to the daily reading of the journals as before-mentioned, his sight, already severely affected, became every day worse, and he was at length obliged to submit to an operation. As this was happily attended with beneficial results, he seized upon the opportunity afforded by his recovery to complete Il Vespro and La Notte, as if he felt conscious that it might be the only period allowed him between his late attack and one still more fatal.

It cannot but have struck the reader with surprise to find this repeated mention of Parini's poem of the Day, and that it was still unfinished.

But he was tremblingly alive to the niceties of language, entertained an opinion that none but the most perfect poetry ought to be sent into the world, and, still more, seems to have been conscious that the power he possessed over his thoughts was greater than the influence which his thoughts exercised on his heart—a case in which a writer of his judgment would know that his chance of reputation depended more on the cautious elegance of his style and the cultivated grace of his descriptions, than on the power or passion of his sentiments. This may in a great measure account for the extreme slowness with which Parini composed, and for the circumstance that his best odes were those written in advanced life. Nor should it be forgotten, that his desire of reputation might furnish another reason for this caution. He had acquired, by the first part of his poem, an extraordinary degree of popularity for so short a work, and he would naturally be unwilling to risk a diminution of his fame by sending another portion of the poem into the world, of the merits and perfection of which he was not tolerably well assured. But, after all, it is not a little surprising to see a man like Parini spending a whole life of study, and producing so few works. The exertion

necessary for the preparation of his lectures must have been, comparatively speaking, trifling; and, excepting the duties of his professorship, he had nothing, during the latter years of his life, of a literary nature, to divert his mind from original composition. But notwithstanding this, all he published himself, (and his posthumous works, with the exception of the two last cantos of the Day, are condemned as possessing little or no merit,) consist of only half his principal poem, extending in all to less than four thousand lines, and of a few odes, and other miscellaneous pieces.

In 1799 intelligence arrived of the rapid progress of the Germans towards Milan, and Parini, it might have been supposed, would have seen reason to dread a formidable interruption to his tranquillity; but he remained undisturbed, and was threatened, says Reina, but not persecuted. Little farther opportunity, however, remained for the enemies of truth to manifest their ill-will against this excellent man. He was now in his seventieth year, and having been for some time deprived of his usual exercise by the state of his eyes, he was attacked with dropsy, which, combined with the natural infirmity of his frame, quickly reduced him to a condition of great feebleness. On the 15th of August, the day on

which he died, he rose at eight o'clock in the morning, being prevented from resting by a violent sensation of heat and wearisome irritability. Two or three friends, professors in the Academy, soon after called on him, and to one of these he recited, in an elevated tone of voice, a sonnet which he had been requested to compose respecting the return of the Germans. On the arrival of his physician, he desired to be informed respecting his condition, and was answered that danger was near, but not immediately at hand. He received this intelligence with the composure that became him; and, taking them into a neighbouring apartment, continued to converse with his friends without exhibiting any signs of agitation or confusion of thought. Being compelled to complain of the burning heat under which he was still suffering, he observed, "Formerly it would have been believed that I was tormented by a demon. There is now no longer any belief either in a demon, or a devil, or even in the God in whom Parini believes."

It was not till two o'clock in the afternoon that he ceased from thus conversing with his friends. He then retired to his chamber, and said to a servant who attended him, that the sight of the eye which had been lately operated upon was un-

usually clear, and that he felt a degree of strength not natural to his weak frame. Having lain down on the bed, he shortly after this expired, and with the same composure and serenity as he had evinced while conversing with his acquaintances.

The peculiar characteristics of Parini's writings are derived from the classical correctness and natural felicity which his style exhibits in such admirable combination; and from the ability which genius and keen patient observation afforded him, to paint the evanescent manners of the world in living colours, and give a scenic brilliancy to his verse, by introducing a succession of new images, and exhibiting each under its most appropriate and striking form. To these sources of the excellence to which our author attained, may be added the equally important ones of great honesty of character, an ardent love of truth, an almost intuitive perception of fitness in manners, and, lastly, a profound respect for his art, in regard to both its literary and moral purposes.

It was from a combination of these sources of excellence that the "Giorno" of Parini derived those varied and original beauties, which obtained it the extensive popularity it has enjoyed from its first publication to the present time. The

English reader may be enabled to form some idea of the style of this celebrated poem, by being told that it has been compared in different parts to that of Pope in his "Rape of the Lock," to that of Cowper in the "Sofa," of Virgil in the "Georgics," and of Crabbe "when he is most harmonious and tender."* Within the line of this noble circle, indeed, may be found brilliant specimens of all the peculiar merits for which Parini is famous; he, however, sought more, perhaps, than any of the English writers to construct his verse and phraseology on an artificial plan, and, generally speaking, he seems to be inferior to them in those excellences of which he occasionally catches the spirit. The object he proposed to himself in the composition of the poem was, as has been intimated, the satirical reproof of the great for their ignorance, and their wasteful expenditure of the day in dressing and in fashionable entertainments. To effect this with more facility than he could have done by direct satires on the follies or vices of the world, like those of Horace or Juvenal, he invented a plan for his poem, by which he gave it a sort of dramatic effect, and avoided the repulsive character of a mere grave reprover. Thus he introduces himself

* Hobhouse. Reina. Ugoni.

as the preceptor of a young nobleman whom he desires to instruct in the important art of "wiling away the slow and wearisome days of life, which is so long and burdensome, and attended with such insufferable annoyances." Nothing can exceed the admirable manner in which, after thus addressing the "Giovin Signore," he describes the morning as it appears in the open fields of Nature, and to the good villager who rises with his wife and children at the first dawn of light, and then suddenly stops in the midst of the description with, "But what? Does your hair stiffen, like the porcupine's quills, at my words? Ah, no, Signore! this is not *your* morning." The cares of the toilette and other preparations for visiting, the methods to be pursued when the hero appears as a cavalier servente, in short, all the circumstances which can be supposed to interest a fashionable, effeminate, and luxurious young man, living in a society constituted like that of an Italian city, are described with the utmost precision and minuteness. But from the light and sarcastic style in which these important lessons are given, the author repeatedly rises into one of superior dignity, and displays great power of language, sometimes in describing trifling occurrences as worthy of heroic verse, at

others in ingenious allegories, and not unfrequently in real appeals to the feelings.

Some few of Parini's odes have received distinguished praise, and it has been observed of him, that he wholly abandoned the track pursued by his predecessors in lyrical composition, restoring it to its legitimate use, that is, to arousing the highest moral or political virtues in those who study it.* In this respect he was certainly very superior to most of the later lyric writers; and we cannot sufficiently admire a man who had sufficient spirit as well as originality of mind to oppose the taste of his age in a matter like this.

The most striking feature in Parini's character as a literary man, was the extreme severity of his critical opinions. He owed, it is believed, more to study than any other author of eminence that ever lived; and hence, probably, the scrupulousness of his taste. "Others," he was accustomed to say, "praise my writings, I cannot praise them. Now that I am old, I know in what beauty consists. If I could recall thirty years of my past life, I should compose something, perhaps, worthy of my country." In the same manner he observed, "The mediocrity, which is so good a thing in fortune, is the

* Ugoni.

worst of all things in the fine arts, which should exhibit nothing except what is supremely excellent." But this severity was strongly contrasted with that which is so often the offspring of mere insensibility and dulness. In the earliest part of Alfieri's career he pronounced him the father of the Italian drama; while of Monti he said, that the sudden and sublime flights of that writer continually threatened a fall, but he never fell.

In his latter years he made Dante and Ariosto his constant companions, observing, that the more he knew of his art the more he admired them, and the more he studied them the more they delighted him. The investigation of the Italian language in all its niceties, and unremitted practice in the employment of it in composition, he considered absolutely necessary to the attainment of any excellence as a writer. "He who knows not his own language," he would say, "cannot make his own thoughts avail him as he desires; and those Italians who run after a false style, and foreign words and idioms, run the risk of losing all precision of ideas." "Avoid," he would also say, "the mean Lombard writers, and the modern Tuscans, who have degenerated from their ancient grandeur." Even his patriotism found an additional ex-

citement in his zeal for the purity of his language: "If we become free," he exclaimed, "we shall have a language which, if it be not at once perfected, will, at least, be proper, expressive, robust, and dignified, for a free people have every thing that is proper and worthy of admiration." Reina, who has carefully recorded these memorabilia of Parini, says, that he once observed to him, while speaking of the pleasure which the publication of Machiavelli's works afforded him, that that author would teach him "to think, to speak, and to write with freedom."

From the same writer, the friend and biographer of Parini, and the editor of his works, we learn that he was as severe in his manners as he was in his criticisms and literary opinions. In his long and constant intercourse with the great, he was never guilty of compromising that dignity with which honesty of thought should invest every human being, and in an especial degree those on whom the Creator has conferred the power of thinking with greater force and clearness than the rest of their species. He flattered neither vices nor follies, and the flattery which he disdained to exercise towards others, he as indignantly repulsed when offered to himself. And this trait in his character was the result of

principle, not of innate moroseness. His heart was as open to friendship as it was firmly shut against the flattery of those who sought his acquaintance as an honour, and the temptations of those who would have paid for his praises with patronage. The intimacies which he formed with persons who merited his esteem were lasting, and a new face was never seen to awaken the same signs of gladness as the sight of those with which he had been long familiar. In the society of young persons he was particularly mild and agreeable, delighting to witness the ebullitions of youthful spirit, and exercising towards his pupils who exhibited an appearance of talent, the most encouraging kindness and attention. He evinced the same suavity of manner in the company of females, and to the graces and accomplishments of those whose virtue was equally worthy of respect, his heart was always open.

To complete the character of this admirable man, he was as firm and rational in his love of liberty, as he was warm and zealous. His reproofs of the great, it has been observed, never partook of that violent or abusive nature which distinguishes satire prompted by vulgar envy rather than by a dignified respect for morality. In expressing

his love of liberty, and his desire to see it established in his own country and elsewhere, he was careful to mark the distinction between freedom and licentiousness; nor, observes his friend, was he ever heard to express a sentiment on the subject opposed to the coolest rectitude—a circumstance the more to be praised, when we consider that Parini was a man of quick feeling, and never accustomed to conceal his real opinions. When disgusted with the turbulent conduct of the French Municipal Government, he remarked, that when faction should cease, and the people establish their own fundamental laws, and nominate their magistrates, he would then again hasten to serve his country. The same feeling gave birth to a sentiment of a higher character. "I console myself," he said, "with the idea of the Divinity; I find no law of human justice secure without the fears and hopes of a life to come."

It is not to be wondered at that Parini, distinguished by so many noble principles, was beloved and honoured by all who had not some dishonest interest to protect, which his virtuous and manly sentiments endangered. His influence with the people was remarkably shown in a circumstance mentioned both by Reina and Mr. Hobhouse. Ac-

cording to the former, some violent demagogue wanted to force him one evening, at the theatre, to join the mob in crying death to the aristocrats, instead of which, he shouted with so terrible a voice, "Live the Republic! death to no one!" that tranquillity was immediately restored. The square opposite the theatre where this occurred, is still pointed out to the stranger as the scene of one of the best triumphs of virtue and a good character over popular feeling, that can be found recorded in history.

The Life of Vittorio Alfieri.

Vittorio Alfieri.

Few men of letters have passed a more active life than the subject of the present memoir, and in tracing whether his personal or literary career, we are repeatedly surprised with the contrast afforded by his love of change, and the constant agitation in which he was kept by the pursuit of pleasure or fame, to the repose in which other literary men are, for the most part, found to place their chief delight.

Victor Alfieri was born in the city of Asti in Piedmont, on the 17th of January 1749, and of noble and wealthy parents. The materials of his biography are afforded by the copious history he has himself given of his life; and the praise he has

uniformly enjoyed for great candour and honesty, renders his work one of the most useful and interesting autobiographies in existence. From his account of his childhood we learn, that his father, a man of the most honourable principles, lived contentedly in retirement, enjoying his ample fortune, and only desiring that a son might be given him to preserve his name, and keep up the family respectability. As he had not married till the fifty-fifth year of his age, the birth of our author filled him with unspeakable pleasure; and that the hope of his house might be guarded as much as possible from the ordinary perils of infancy, he sent him to be nursed in the country, about two miles from Asti. Almost every day the good father walked to see his little son; neither the storms of winter nor the oppressive heats of summer could deter him from this labour; but before Victor had completed the first year of his life, the fatigue he suffered from his walk, in one of the most sultry days of the season, drew a sore in his body, of which he died in a few days.

The mother of our author remained but a short time in the state of widowhood, taking for her third husband the Cavalier Giacinto Alfieri di Mag-

liano, a gentleman whose manners and person were well calculated to secure her regard.

The first affectionate feelings of Victor's heart were called into play by his sister Giulia, about two years older than himself; and it was in his parting from her in his seventh year, when she was sent to a convent, that he experienced the greatest affliction he had hitherto known. In regard to his education, no farther care was taken by his mother and father-in-law than to provide him a tutor, whose incapacity for the charge wholly escaped their notice; "it not being at all necessary," they observed, "that a gentleman should be as learned as a doctor." Notwithstanding, however, this neglect, Victor felt an early inclination for study, which was greatly increased by his being deprived of his sister's society; and before he was eight years old, he began to experience those impressions of melancholy which gave so remarkable a colouring to his future life. Without any other cause than an indefinable sorrow, he once sought to destroy himself by eating what he supposed to be poisonous herbs, while his horror of being looked at, and his general timidity, which were greatly increased by the foolish punishments to which he was subjected, afforded sure in-

dications of the evils to which he would be shortly exposed. In describing his character at this period of his life, he says that he was taciturn and placid for the most part, but occasionally lively and loquacious; that he was always in the extremes—obstinate and restive if force were employed, but most pliable to kind treatment and advice; having a greater dread of ridicule than of any thing besides—susceptible of shame even to excess, and inflexible if he chanced to be discovered and rebuked. But in the year 1758, according to the wise suggestions of his paternal uncle, the Cavalier Pellegrino Alfieri, he was dispatched to Turin to complete his education. An old servant was sent with him, in the double capacity of attendant and guardian, and the journey was performed in a manner which greatly pleased his youthful vanity. His humour on the occasion was to show his bravery, hardihood, and contempt of whatever it did not become a traveller to indulge in. When they stopped, therefore, to bait the horses at an inn on the road, feeling himself thirsty, he strutted into the court-yard, and not deigning to ask for a glass, dipped the corner of his cap into a cistern, and drank his fill of the water. To the remonstrances of his attendant and the postilion he bravely re-

plied, that they who were about to travel through the world, ought to despise such things, and that a good soldier should not drink otherwise than he had done. Whence he had gathered these Achilles-like ideas he knew not, he says, as his mother had always educated him with great softness. His impressions on reaching Turin were such as every youth of sensibility would feel in similar circumstances. It was between one and two in the afternoon when he entered the city; the day was bright and lovely, and as the carriage drove down the principal street, his heart bounded with delight. "But my feelings," says he, "were not so glad in the evening, when I found myself in a strange house, surrounded by unknown persons, without my mother, without my old master, my eyes bent on the face of my uncle, whom I had seen but once in my life, and whose looks seemed very different to those of my caressing, loving mother: all this threw me into grief and regret, and made me anxiously wish for the objects I had parted from the day before."

His spirits, however, did not remain long depressed, and having become reconciled to his new home, and finding himself under less restraint than ever, his uncle, who had intended to secure his

rapid improvement by removing him to Turin, began to grow weary of his juvenile sports, and hastened to place him in the academy, to which he sent him in August instead of October, as had been proposed. His account of the institution of which he was thus become a member, gives an excellent view of the state of public education in Italy in the last century. "I found myself," says he, "at the age of nine years and a half, transplanted into the midst of unknown persons, at a distance from my friends, isolated and abandoned, as it were, to myself; for the species of education of which I was now the subject pretended to no influence on the minds of the youths, except in regard to their studies, and heaven knows how little in that respect. No moral maxim, no instruction in life was ever given us, and in fact who was there who could give it us? for the tutors themselves knew nothing of the world either in theory or practice.

"The academy itself was a very sumptuous edifice, divided into four sides, in the midst of which was an immense court. Two of these sides were occupied by the students; the other two by the king's theatre, and the royal archives.

"The side occupied by us who were called of the second and third apartment, was opposite the

latter; that occupied by those of the first apartment being opposite the king's theatre. The upper gallery on our side was called the third apartment, and was destined to the youngest pupils and inferior schools; the gallery on the ground-floor was called the second, and was intended for the more adult: a third or half of these studied in the university, another edifice close by the academy; the rest pursued their studies in the military college. Every gallery contained four chambers at least, each occupied by eleven youths, over whom presided a person named the Assistente, generally some poor fellow whose only payment consisted in receiving board and lodging free, while he studied theology or law in the university; and, if the Assistente was not a student, he was generally some old and ignorant priest. A third part of the side destined to the first apartment was occupied by the king's pages, to the number of twenty or twenty-five, who were totally separated from us, at the opposite angle of the vast court, and close by the archives before mentioned. We, the younger students, could not have been worse situated: between a theatre, which we were not permitted to enter above five or six times during the carnival; the pages, who attended on the Court,

and who, continually hunting and riding, appeared to enjoy so much freer and happier a life than we did; and, lastly, among foreigners, who occupied the first apartment, almost to the exclusion of natives, and who consisted of a mixture of northerns, English principally, Russians, and Germans, and some from other parts of Italy. It was a lodging-place to them rather than one of education, for they were restrained by no rules, except that of being in before midnight; in other respects they went to the court, the theatres, and into good or bad company, as it suited their inclination."

Our poet was placed in the third apartment, and in the middle chamber. His man Andrew, who still attended him, was become a petty tyrant, and between him and the Assistente poor Victor had little prospect of comfort. The tutors, who examined him the day after he entered the academy, put him in the fourth class, with an intimation that in three months they expected he would be fit for the third; but the teachers were even more ignorant than the priest under whom he had studied at home, and he speaks in no very flattering terms of any part of the establishment. "I was an ass among asses, and under an ass. I read Cornelius Nepos, some of Virgil's Eclogues, and such things;

we made stupid, nonsensical themes, so that in any well directed school we should have been considered a very miserable fourth class. I was never the last in the company; emulation spurred me on till I had surpassed or equalled the lad who stood first; but I had no sooner reached the top than I sank back into torpor and indifference. I was, perhaps, to be excused, for nothing could equal the dullness and insipidity of those studies. We translated the lives of Cornelius Nepos, but none of us, probably not even the master himself, knew who those men were whose lives we translated, nor their countries, nor in what age they flourished, nor under what governments they lived, nor even what a government was. All our ideas were either circumscribed, or false, or confused; the teacher had no object in teaching—the students no excitement in learning. They were shameful fellows; no one watched over us, or if any one did, he knew nothing."

In November he was promoted to the Humanity class, and found an instructor much superior to the tutors of the lower forms. He was also excited to emulation by a youth who at first wrote better themes than he did, and who could recite six hundred lines from the Georgics, whereas his own me-

mory would not retain more than four hundred. The superiority of his classman sometimes choked him with rage, and prompted him occasionally to open complaint and abuse, but, on the whole, they were good friends, and the poet was generous enough to admit the merits of his rival except when smarting under a new defeat. His vexation was also considerably diminished by his shortly after gaining the complete superiority in theme-writing, and his envy, by the fine countenance of his opponent, personal beauty having had from his infancy a powerful effect on his judgment. About this period also he became possessed of a volume of Ariosto, how, he was unable to remember, but he believed by purchasing it of a fellow-student with the part of a fowl which was allowed him every Sunday, and which he resigned for six months together to another of his companions who told him stories, for which the pullet was given in payment. Ariosto he was unable to comprehend, though he could translate the Georgics, and there were lines of which neither he nor his companions could discover the meaning; to add to their perplexity, the tutor, finding the book in their possession, immediately forfeited it, and they were again left without any means of becoming ac-

quainted with the poetry of their native language.

The health of Victor was even less improved than his mind, by his residence in the academy; he increased neither in height nor robustness, and was more like a little wax-candle, he says, than any thing else. During the severe attacks of sickness which he suffered, he had no very near relations in Turin to attend to his wants, his uncle having been made Governor of Cuneo, where he resided eight months in the year. A cousin of his father, however, often asked him to his house, and Alfieri retained to the end of his life an affectionate regard for this kind-hearted man. He was an architect by profession, and as architect to the King had built many of the most magnificent edifices in Turin. His conversation was almost always on his favourite art, and such was his idolatrous veneration for Michel Angelo, that he never pronounced his name without taking off his hat and bowing. By a residence in Rome he had also acquired a perfect acquaintance with the Tuscan dialect, for the use of which, on his return to Turin, he was at first ridiculed by his acquaintances; "But such," observes Alfieri, "is the power of the beautiful and the true, that after a little time they discovered that he spoke a lan-

guage, while they used only a rude and barbarous jargon, and they thenceforth were continually visiting him, in order to babble forth their Tuscan, especially the Signors who were desirous of converting their houses into palaces."

In 1760 our student was placed under the professor of rhetoric, a man very inferior to the superintendant of the humanity class. But the bad state of Victor's health, the ridicule he suffered from his companions, who abused him on account of a scorbutic eruption with which he was afflicted, and his natural susceptibility to such affronts, made a deep impression on his mind; and, as he began to find comfort only in solitude, he was obliged almost in self-defence to employ his time in study. So poor, however, was the effect of his academical pursuits, that though he recovered his Ariosto, and found opportunities to read him, the varied inventions of the poet afforded him little pleasure, and he ceased at last to study him at all, disgusted with the continual breaks in the story, and the difficulty he experienced in tracing a connexion between one part and the other. The translation of the Æneid by Annibale Caro afforded him far greater amusement, and some of Metastasio's operas would have delighted him still more had it not been that they

ended just as they were beginning to excite his sympathies,—a greater annoyance, he observes, than that occasioned by the interruptions in Ariosto.

The following year,—he was then but thirteen,—he entered upon philosophy, and was placed in the class de' Grandi. His memory was now his whole dependance, and though he could never comprehend the fourth proposition of the first book of Euclid, he contrived to make a conspicuous figure, little as he was, among the Grand. The lecture on the peripatetic philosophy took place after dinner, and was, according to his account, only a temptation to sleep standing. Some months, however, after his advancement to this class, his sister Giulia was sent to Turin, to protect her from a lover whose addresses she had shown signs of being inclined to receive, though not yet fifteen. In addition to the pleasure Victor received from her presence, he had the gratification of visiting the King's theatre during the carnival, in company with his relation the architect. The delight with which he heard the music of the opera for the first time was unbounded. The piece was Il Mercato di Malmantile, and the performers were the best in Italy. "The brilliancy and variety of that divine music," says he, "made a profound impression

on me, leaving, if I may so speak, the track of the harmony in my ears and in my imagination, and agitating every fibre of my frame to such a degree, that for more than a week I remained sunk in a profound and extraordinary, but not unpleasing melancholy; from this I conceived a total disgust and nausea of my accustomed studies, and, at the same time, a singular awakening of fantastic ideas which would have enabled me to make verses had I known how to go about it, and to express the most lively emotions had I not been unknown both to myself and to those who pretended to educate me. This was the first time that music took so great an effect upon me, and it long remained impressed upon my memory." Sound, he continues to observe, was the most powerful agitator of his mind, of his heart, and intellect, at all periods of his life, and especially that of counter-treble and female voices. "Nothing appears to me," he says, "more affecting, more various, or more terrible; and all my tragedies have, I may say, been conceived either while I was actually hearing music, or a little after." Not long after this he was permitted to visit Cuneo, where he spent a fortnight with his uncle, and made his first sonnet, which, though praised by many persons,

was so ridiculed by the Count, that from that period, till he was more than twenty-five, he never again thought of making verses.

The death of his uncle, which occurred a few months after this visit, and his having arrived at the age of fourteen, set him somewhat more at liberty; his servant Andrew, who had turned out very unworthy of his trust, was dismissed for a more respectable guardian; and having gained the degree of Master of Arts, he was rewarded for his diligence by being admitted into the riding-school, the great object of his wishes for some time past, and which had the effect of greatly improving his weak constitution. The being obliged to take lessons of a French dancing-master was very differently felt, and he conceived a disgust for what he terms that puppet-like accomplishment of dancing, which never left him.

On the 8th of May 1763, a memorable era in the journal of his youth, he was removed to the first apartment, which was nearly filled, as has been said, with foreigners, the greater portion of whom were English. The manner in which they passed their time has been already mentioned, and Alfieri was not long before he assimilated his manners to theirs. "A table served like a lord's,"

says he, "much dissipation, very little study, much sleep, riding every day, and following my own inclination more and more, quickly restored and redoubled my health, my activity, and fervour." His hair, which in his illness had been shaved off, to his great annoyance, began to grown again, his whole appearance improved at the same time, and with that improvement he became desirous of fashionable dress, in which he found means to indulge himself by obtaining credit of a complacent but extortioning tailor. Having escaped at the same time from the heavy studies of the schools, he was at liberty to seek what species of reading he chose, but so little was he acquainted even with the names of books, or so imperfect was his notion of his native literature, that during a fit of industry, which lasted about three months, he confined himself to the perusal of Fleury's Ecclesiastical History.

The idle and cheerful style, however, in which he now spent his time, underwent a sudden change, occasioned by his own imprudent wish to obtain still greater freedom. None of the other students who occupied the first apartment were under an attendant, and he resolved upon trying the experiment of going out by himself as they did. He was reprimanded, and was contumacious — was

punished by confinement to the College Court, but despised the decree: and thus the struggle went on between him and the superiors of the Academy, till it ended in his being made a prisoner in his chamber. He now refused to rise from his bed, and remained sunk in obstinate melancholy, resolving never to reclaim a liberty which he enjoyed so imperfectly, and passing his days, as he describes it, like a brute beast. The marriage of his sister Giulia at length set him free; he accompanied her and her husband into the country, and, on his return, was indulged with the liberty for which he had contended. At the same time, also, he acquired greater command over the fortune left him by his father; and the first use he made of his money was to buy a horse, of which he was so fond, that his anxiety, if it ailed any thing, which it often did, would keep him awake all the night; but, by the end of the year, he not only possessed this first and special favourite, but had seven other horses besides.

Nobleness and generosity of nature were not less evident in Alfieri's disposition at this period than his love of horses and rich clothes. Possessing a greater command of money than most of the other young men in the Academy, even those of

high birth, whose fathers were still living, he was able to indulge in luxuries which to them were unattainable. But, being as free from vulgar vanity as he was fond of making a figure among his equals, he never sought to offend those who were inferior to him, either in fortune or mind, by a boastful show of superiority. Thus, whenever he had procured a new dress for some particular occasion, or to rival some of his companions, his equals, he always took care to pull it off before rejoining the rest of his fellow-students, or to hide it up, if they came to his rooms, blushing, he says, as if he had been guilty of some crime, if they chanced to see him in it. "And such, in fact," he continues, "I felt in my heart it was to have, and much more, to make a show of those things, which my friends could not have." On this principle of loving grandeur, but subjecting his pride to his kindness of heart, he prevailed upon his guardian, after great contention, to let him purchase a very elegant carriage, a thing ridiculous enough, as he observes, for a lad of sixteen, and in a little city like Turin; but, after he had obtained it, he was ashamed of riding in it while he saw his friends walking, and it was, therefore, scarcely ever used. He still kept up his number of horses, and this

only because he could indulge his humour in them without exciting any degree of envy in his companions, which was more than counterbalanced by his stud being always as much at their service as his own.

After having spent about ten months in this manner, felt the first symptoms of love, excited by a lady whom he had seen for a few days on a visit to some friends, and made a journey to Genoa, he left the Academy, in the character of Porta-insegna, in the provincial regiment of Asti. He joined his company in the September of 1766, and fulfilled all his duties, but abhorred them, "not being able," he observes, "to adapt himself to that chain of graduated dependance which is called subordination, and which is, it is true, the soul of military discipline, but could never be the soul of a future tragic poet." The calls upon his time or attention, however, were very slight; and, after encountering some opposition from his friends and the King, he obtained permission to visit various parts of Italy, under the protection of an English Catholic, who was tutor to two young men, a Fleming and a Dutchman, students in the Academy.

The party set out from Turin on the morning of the 4th of October 1766. The first place at which

they stopped for any time was Milan; and, in visiting the Ambrosian Library, Alfieri gave another notable instance of his profound ignorance of his native literature. As one of the most precious curiosities in the collection, the librarian handed him an autograph manuscript of Petrarch's, when, barbarian-like, he pushed it from him, saying, it was nothing to him. He accounts for his conduct in this affair by observing, that he had had, at the bottom of his heart, a secret ill will against the said Petrarch for some years before, for when he was a philosopher, having taken up his poems, he could not for the world discover his meaning, on which account he had enrolled himself with the French and other presumptuous ignoramuses, setting him down as a sectarian, and a babbler of cold conceits. At Florence, where they arrived in October, he was somewhat affected at the sight of Michael Angelo's tomb, and the thought suddenly rose in his mind, that those only were the truly great among men who had left something lasting behind them. With less complacency he records, that, instead of taking advantage of his month's residence in the Tuscan capital to improve his knowledge of his own language, he employed the whole time in studying English.

In December the travellers reached Rome, and Alfieri visited the usual objects of curiosity, going to St. Peter's twice a-day, and examining it with laudable patience and attention. From Rome they proceeded to Naples, and, after staying there some weeks, our poet obtained permission, through the influence of the Sardinian Ambassador, to bid farewell to his English tutor, and pursue his tour without any one to interfere with his inclination. He immediately returned to Rome, whence he made another application to his guardian for leave to visit France, England, and Holland. He was again successful; but his guardian accompanied the permission with an intimation that he should allow him but 1500 zecchins for the journey, as only 1200 had been thought sufficient for that he was at present making. Alfieri considered the addition of 300 zecchins too little, when the much greater length of the journey was remembered; but fearing, if he made any complaint, that an order might be sent for his return, he quietly resolved to meet the difficulty by saving all he could before he crossed the Alps, and out of the sum allowed for his Italian tour. He now began to know what parsimony was, and he accuses himself of having been guilty of keeping back his faithful

servant Elia's wages, and diminishing his supplies, till the poor fellow said he would drive him to rob for his living, and this though he set the greatest value on his services and attachment. Proud and impatient as he was, too, he determined to travel with a vetturino instead of by post, and submitted to the torture of riding a miserable beast all the way to Loretto, where his patience got the better of his resolution to be saving.

Venice at first greatly delighted him, with its numerous theatres, its crowds of strangers, from various parts of the world, and the gay scenes which it constantly presented: but in the midst of all this gaiety he was attacked with the melancholy humour to which he had been so early subject. His observations on this circumstance will greatly assist us in forming a correct view of his character, and of the complicated feelings, which, by their operation on his powerful intellect, served both to develope and modify his genius. "I passed," says he, "almost all my time at Venice alone, without going out of the house, and without doing any thing else but stand at the window and make signs at or hold little dialogues with a lady who lived opposite. The remainder of the long, weary day I passed in sleeping, or in ruminating on I

know not what, and very often in complaining, I knew not why, without ever finding peace, and never either doubting or investigating the cause of my restlessness and melancholy. Many years after, when I could reflect better, I found that this was a periodical affection, which occurred every year, in the spring, generally in April, sometimes not till June, and that it attacked me with more or less severity, in proportion as my heart and mind were more or less empty and unemployed. In the same manner, I have since observed, comparing my mind to an excellent barometer, that I have more or less ability to compose according to the less or greater weight of the atmosphere; that a total stupidity seizes me during the violent solstitial or equinoctial gales; that I am infinitely less clear in the evening than in the morning; and that I have a great deal more fancy, enthusiasm, and aptitude for invention in the coldest winters and hottest summers, than in moderate seasons. This my materialism, which I believe to be common, more or less, to all men of delicate nerves, has, with the aid of time, greatly lessened my conceit of the little I have done well, as it has also diminished, in great measure, my shame for the much I have done ill, especially in my art, being fully convinced

that it was not in my power, in the seasons which I mention, to do otherwise."

To a person in sound health this reasoning appears sufficiently unsubstantial, and the sufferings of which it speaks, awake little pity in the minds of those who have to stretch their imagination to conceive the power of an imaginary affliction. But our real pains and pleasures, of every kind, are so much heightened by fancy, and are so little, at any time, increased or lessened by reason, that the error seems on the side of those who refuse to place the unsubstantial grievances of the hypochondriac in the same rank with the ills which torture men's frames, or ruin their fortunes. The question, however, might have been fairly asked Alfieri, who excused his having written badly when the season was too hot, or too cold, or when the wind was in a wrong quarter, "Why he wrote at all at those times? for he, of course, had no remarkable impulse to composition at a period when to compose was a pain and labour, and he had, therefore, no spell upon his mind to deceive him as to his incapacity for thinking or giving birth to his thoughts. When the question is one of morality, it assumes a more serious aspect; and there are few persons who respect humanity, or place a due

value on the means which exist for raising and improving it, who would willingly believe that its noblest attributes can be irresistibly subject to the change of seasons and the atmosphere.

Alfieri, by his anxiety to visit many new and foreign scenes, lost both the pleasure and profit he might have derived from those before him. Venice, with all its brilliant collections of art, and the historical associations connected with its public buildings, was passed carelessly over. After a dull and useless sojourn, therefore, in that city, the early story of which is as splendid as the crown of palaces with which it has wedded the Adriatic, he set out with the intention of proceeding as speedily as possible to France; and, embarking at Genoa, landed first at Toulon, the aspect of which not pleasing him, he hastened to Marseilles, where the theatre, and the pleasure of bathing morning and evening from a lone and rocky point of the shore, put him in good humour with both himself and the city. In relating this part of his story, he repeats the observation he had already made several times. "I could have composed much poetry there, if I had known how to write either in prose or verse, or in any language whatever."

But the amusements which he enjoyed at Marseilles soon tired, and he set off for Paris on the 10th of August, travelling *ferocemente dalle frenesia*, and more like a fugitive than a tourist. In this manner he hastened to Lyons, passing every object on the road worthy of notice without the slightest regard. "Neither Aix, with its magnificent and smiling scenery; nor Avignon, once the seat of the Papacy, and the burial-place of the celebrated Laura; nor Vaucluse, the residence so long of our divine Petrarch—nothing could divert me from flying, straight as an arrow, towards Paris. At Lyons mere weariness compelled me to rest two nights and a day; and setting out, at the end of that time, with the same fury as before, I reached Paris, by way of Burgundy, in less than three days."

The cloudy skies, narrow streets, untasteful buildings, and bad smells which offended his senses on entering the celebrated capital of France, made him reflect for a moment with regret on the serene atmosphere and noble edifices he had left behind. The season also remaining uncommonly wet, and the Court being at Fontainbleau, he was soon weary of the city, to reach which had cost him so much exertion. His subsequent introduction to the King by the Sardinian Ambassador, and the

opportunity of entering the best society of the place, did not alter his first impressions, and he gladly embraced the opportunity of proceeding to England in the company of the Ambassador's nephew, a gay and talkative young man, who made a jest of his melancholy humour and fastidiousness, but contributed, by his good-nature and anecdotes of his love adventures, to render the journey agreeable. It is pleasant to hear the poet speak of the feelings with which he first beheld London. "As much as the first sight of Paris displeased me, that of England, and especially of London, pleased me. The streets, the inns, the horses, the women, the universal comfort, the life and activity of that island, the neatness and convenience of the houses, though very small, the absence of beggars, and the constant circulation of money, and industry, diffused equally in the provinces as in the capital—all these endowments of that fortunate and free country captivated me at the first sight, nor has my opinion been at all changed, though I have visited it twice since."

In the course of his stay in this country, he became known to most of the best families in town, through the introduction of the Spanish ambassador, the Prince di Masserano, who was also a relative

of his travelling companion. In company with the latter, he visited Bath, Bristol, Salisbury, and other provincial towns; and so well pleased did he continue with the country, that the idea rose in his mind that he should be happy to remain here for ever. It was not, however, he observes, the people who pleased him so much; but the aspect of the country, the simple customs, the fair and modest women, and above all, the equitable government, and the true liberty which is its offspring—these, he continues, were sufficient to make him disregard the unpleasantness of the climate, the melancholy so common here, and the ruinous dearness of living.

But notwithstanding his favourable opinion of England, and English customs, he set out on the 1st of June for Holland, and arriving at the Hague when the fine weather made every thing look cheerful around him, he was not disappointed with the country, with which, he says, he should have been still more gratified had he never seen England, which he describes himself as preferring, Italy only excepted, to any nation in the world.

At the Hague, he became acquainted with a lady, the wife of a gentleman of rank, whose beauty attracted his attention, and inspired him with a passion little honourable either in its nature or

effects. After following her into Switzerland, whither she travelled with her husband, he was obliged to bid her farewell, and determined in consequence to destroy himself. For this purpose, he sent for a surgeon to bleed him, and as soon as he was placed in bed, removed the bandage from his arm with the intention of letting himself bleed to death; but he repented in a minute or two, and calling to his friend to replace the binding, became reconciled to life.

Shortly after this affair, he resolved upon returning to Italy, and by the beginning of winter found himself safely lodged in his sister's villa, after an absence from his country of two years and some days. He had now nothing to occupy his attention, and as he had purchased several books in passing through Geneva, he, for the first time of his life, thought of seeking relief from weariness and melancholy in reading. But it was difficult for him to decide on what to read. He knew little or nothing of the literature of his own country, and such was the bad dialect spoken in Turin and its neighbourhood, that he was scarcely able, it appears, to understand the harmonious and exquisite periods of the Italian classics. Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso, therefore, were out of the question, and he sought

in Rousseau or Voltaire the nourishment of his mind, at present so ill prepared either to discover their sophisms, or to perceive in what manner he might convert their better reasonings to the improvement of his own philosophy. But even these authors were only read at uncertain intervals. The "Nouvelle Eloise," however, he criticised with some severity and judgment: he endeavoured several times, he says, to read it; but though of a nature sufficiently impassioned to take an interest in its scenes, he never could overcome his dislike of the mannerism and affectation to be discovered in that celebrated work, or of the signs it gives of so much hotness of head with so much coldness of heart. The "Contract Sociale" of the same author, Alfieri was unable to understand, and therefore made little attempt to get through it. Of the works of Voltaire, he had the natural good taste to reject the poetry for the prose, to which he almost entirely confined his attention. Helvetius made a deep impression on his mind, and if he had not sufficient thought to become a metaphysician, he had sufficient heart to take an interest in the views which were suddenly opened to him respecting his own nature, and that of his fellow beings. It was, it may be believed, from the same principle, that he

perused with such enthusiasm and avidity the Lives of Plutarch. Some of these, as those of Timoleon, Cæsar, Pelops, Cato, Brutus, and others, he read four or five times, transported to such a degree with rage, regret, or admiration at their fortunes and actions, that any one in the next chamber to that in which he sate would have thought him mad. "Often," says he, "I sprang upon my feet with agitation and almost out of myself, and with tears, lamentation, and madness, raved to know that I was born in Piedmont, and in an age when nothing could be either done or said, and where it was almost useless to think or understand." At the same time also he studied something of astronomy, and though not able to overcome any better than formerly the difficulties of geometry, he comprehended sufficiently well the motions of the heavenly bodies to raise his mind to the contemplation of the sublime system of the universe.

These were propitious signs of the change which would at no very distant day take place in the intellectual condition of our poet: he had begun to discriminate between false and true representations of Nature—to comprehend how the human mind may be exalted to inspire deeds, the history of which is the fountain-head of the noblest poetry

and he had learned, above all, both by this study and by that of astronomy, to free his mind from its narrow, individual boundaries, to forget Turin and the eighteenth century in his sympathy with the great and free of distant times and countries, and to annihilate the littlenesses of thought by making himself free of the universe.

It was while his mind was thus beginning to acquire new vigour, that his friends conceived the idea of marrying him to a rich heiress of Turin, and of curing by that means both his melancholy and his love of wandering. At first he felt the most violent repugnance to the proposition;—to have children born in Turin! where nothing good could be either said or done. Notwithstanding, however, this reflection, the beautiful black eyes of the lady, and still more her large fortune, reconciled him by degrees to the thought of becoming a husband; but he had scarcely made himself contented, and even happy at the prospect before him, when a gentleman, whose family had great influence with the King, and who was himself very amiable, stepped in and married the lady without delay.

"The girl did well for her own happiness, and well for mine too," says Alfieri, "for if I had married I should certainly never have been a poet."

He acknowledges, however, that he blushed when he remembered the baseness of which he had been guilty in proposing to marry from a motive of avarice, but at the same time he endeavours to excuse his falling into the temptation, by mentioning the resolution he had formed while at Naples of becoming a diplomatist, in which character great wealth would have been necessary to his influence and splendour.

His ardour for travelling was now greater than ever, and as he had just come into the entire possession of his fortune, and, besides his regular revenue, had between two and three thousand zecchins in advance, there was nothing to oppose his wishes, and in May 1769 he again bade Turin farewell, and took the road to Vienna. His faithful servant Elia still accompanied him, and relieved him of every care but that of providing for his own comfort. The Essays of Montaigne contributed to relieve the fatigue of the way, and being now far less impatient than on his former journey, he found considerable pleasure in perusing the old author, and exercising his own thoughts at the same time. All that annoyed him was, that he was constantly obliged to look at the bottom of the page for a translation of the Latin quotations, of which Montaigne is so fond, from the utter incapacity, he ob-

serves, to which he was reduced, of comprehending the most trivial passages of prose, to say nothing of those from the poets. The meaning even of verses taken from Italian authors he was obliged to seek in the notes, "because it would have cost me," says he, "some little fatigue to understand them without. Such was my primitive ignorance, and want of practice in that divine language, with which I every day became less and less acquainted."

At Vienna the ambassador from Turin offered to introduce him to Metastasio, at whose house he was accustomed to pass the evening in company with the literary men whom the poet assembled round him for conversation, and the perusal of the Latin and Greek classics. The ambassador affectionately sought to awaken in Alfieri a thirst for literature by inviting him to join this erudite party. "But besides being retired by nature," says the latter, "I was wholly ingulphed in French, and despised every Italian book and author. That assemblage, therefore, of literary men with their classics was in my eyes but a multitude of fastidious pedants." To this cause of his disinclination to join the party at Metastasio's, he adds another. "I had seen Metastasio," says he, "in the Impe-

rial gardens at Schoenbrunn, make the customary genuflexions to Maria Teresa, with a face so servilely smooth and adulatory, that, Plutarchizing like a youth, and exaggerating truth in the abstract, as I did, I could never consent to contract either friendship or familiarity with a muse hired or sold to despotic authority, which I abhorred so strongly."

It was with similar feelings he entered the dominions of Frederick the Great. On seeing some of his troops, " I felt," says he, " my horror doubled and trebled for that infamous military art, most infamous, and the only foundation of arbitrary authority, which is always the necessary fruit of so many thousands of paid satellites. I was presented to the King. I could perceive in myself no sign of wonder or veneration, but those rather of indignation and anger—emotions which were every day increased and strengthened at the sight of the many and various things which were not as they ought to have been, and which being false, usurp the form and the reputation of what is true. Count Finch, the King's minister, who presented me, asked me as I was in the service of my sovereign, why I had not worn my uniform that day? 'Because,' I replied, 'there are already too many uniforms here.'

The King addressed to me the four customary words; I observed him profoundly, fixing my eyes respectfully on his, and I thanked Heaven for not having destined me to be born his slave."

From Prussia, Alfieri proceeded to Copenhagen, whence he intended to travel as rapidly as possible to St. Petersburgh.

Sweden, which he reached towards the end of March, inspired him with ideas resembling those of Ossian, and he contemplated with a mixed feeling of awe and delight the vast lakes and dark and wooded precipices with which that country abounds. The people, and the character of the government were not less objects of his admiration, and had he been capable, he observes, of any serious application, he would have examined the latter with profound interest; but his want of a proper preparation for such investigations incapacitated him from judging of things, except from the first general impressions they made on his mind, and thus he confesses that he had no idea of the corrupt state of the nobility, or the bad condition of the poor in Sweden, a knowledge of which would have considerably changed his opinion as to the value of its constitution.

He was happy and amused at Stockholm, but

it was equal to him whether a country afforded him satisfaction, or only excited his indignation or disgust. To rest was impossible, and early in May, therefore, he set out for St. Petersburgh. His voyage across the gulph of Bothnia, which was almost frozen over, was fatiguing and perilous, but it kept his spirits in agitation, and therefore gratified him. Every scene, indeed, which he witnessed in these northern regions, gave him pleasure. "They were calculated," he observes, "to awaken fantastic, melancholy, and grand images in the mind by a certain vast, indefinable silence which reigns in the atmosphere, making us feel as if we were out of the world.

The constant glaring of the aurora borealis, on which he gazed through the night, confused his head, and after a short time he could tell neither the hour of the day, nor the day of the week, and in this state of weariness he entered the territories of Catherine II. Saint Petersburgh greatly disappointed him, and so violent was his contempt of the inhabitants and of the Empress, that during the seven weeks he remained there he sought no acquaintances, and took scarcely any interest in the objects presented to his inquiry. He returned, therefore, to Berlin, little satisfied

with what he had witnessed in Russia, and again passing through Germany and Holland, once more set his foot on English ground.

During this visit to England he entered into all the fashionable amusements of the metropolis, became acquainted with the wife of an officer in the army, fought a duel, in which he was wounded in the arm, and was about to marry the divorced lady, when she confessed, to his horror, what the public papers informed him of a day or two after, that she had been as guilty with her husband's groom as with himself. This astounding intelligence destroyed all the vanity which had been plentifully fed by the success of his addresses, and he was plunged in profound grief, being as much disgusted with his own folly, for of the moral guilt he says nothing, as he was with the abandoned woman herself. At first, however, he found it impossible to shake off the fetters she had placed upon his affections; pitying her condition, therefore, he resolved upon conducting her into France, and seeing her placed in some monastery; but they had only reached Dover, when the continued exposure of her conduct in the newspapers, and the frequent mention of his own name in a manner

sufficiently disagreeable to his feelings, diverted him from his intention, and they separated.

Alfieri himself proceeded to Brussels, and thence to Paris, which pleased him no better than at first. He might have become acquainted with Rousseau; "but although," says he, "I held Rousseau in the highest estimation, and that more for his pure and admirable character, and for his lofty and independent conduct than for his writings, of which the few I had read had wearied me by their affectation, yet with all my esteem for him, as I was not by nature curious, nor very tolerant, and knew that I was more proud and inflexible than even he was, I had no inclination to avail myself of a doubtful introduction to so proud and whimsical a man, to whom, if I had received only half an affront, I should have restored it ten-fold; for I have always, by the instinct of an impetuous nature, returned with usury both the good and the evil I have received." These passages in his life are invaluable, as they enable us to form a true estimate of his character, the peculiarities of which had so great an influence on his writings, and consequently on the dramatic literature of his country.

He left Paris for Spain about the middle of August, but before his departure he purchased a set of the principal Italian classics, in thirty-six volumes, which thenceforth became the inseparable companions of his travels. It was not, however, till two years after this that he began to enjoy his purchase. He bought them, he says, rather to have than to read them; for with the exception of Metastasio, he found it difficult to understand the language of an Italian author; but the work subsequently proved of invaluable use to him, for it made him acquainted with the six great luminaries of his country, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli.

The first place at which he remained for any length of time was Barcelona, where he purchased two magnificent Spanish horses, of which he speaks with enthusiastic pleasure. He also began to study the language, and, resuming his route, proceeded to Madrid by way of Saragossa. In describing this journey, he again regrets, that he was unable at that period to express his thoughts in verse; the solitary wastes, through which he slowly travelled, and the wild, romantic character of the scenery giving birth to thoughts which it only required a mastery over expression to become

true and living poetry. His reflection on this circumstance is curious: "Not possessing any language, nor dreaming that I should or could ever write any thing, either in verse or prose, I contented myself with ruminating on my thoughts; sometimes complaining, I knew not why, and at others laughing with just as little reason;—two things, which, if they are not followed by writing, are regarded as mere madness;—and so they are: but if they bring forth composition, they are called poetry;—and they are so."

He knew no one at Madrid but a young watch-maker, whom he had seen in Holland; and thus he led, he says, more the life of a bear than of a man. This want of society contributed also to increase his natural disposition to melancholy, and the violence of his temper, which neither experience nor philosophy as yet assisted him to subdue. An instance of the licence he allowed his passion occurred during his residence at Madrid, which had nearly proved of a still more serious character. It was his custom before retiring to bed to have his hair, a greater source of trouble to men of fashion in those days than at present, put in order by Elia. On the occasion in question, the young watch-maker, a man of some talent and know-

ledge of the world, had been spending the evening with him, and they were still conversing together while the servant was proceeding with dressing Alfieri's head. In the course of the process the unfortunate domestic happened accidentally to twitch one of the hairs rather harder than was agreeable, on which the infuriated master sprang from his seat, and seizing a candlestick from the table, struck him a blow on the right temple with all his strength. The blood gushed copiously forth, and Alfieri's guest thinking that he was suddenly taken delirious, instantly endeavoured to secure him. Elia at the same moment put himself in a position to revenge the injury he had received, and as his master had armed himself with a sword that stood in the room, the death of one of the parties seemed inevitable. The watchmaker had sufficient to do to prevent this from becoming the fatal consequence of his friend's fury. Elia was a large and very powerful man, and was not inferior to his master in resolution; happily, however, the domestics of the house were alarmed by the noise of the fray, and, rushing into the apartment, they succeeded by main force in separating the combatants.

The value and great charm of Alfieri's autobio-

graphy result from the candour with which he invariably seems to write. His account of the present affair affords a striking proof of his merit in this respect, for he has not sought either to conceal any of the circumstances, or to apologize for the unprovoked and savage atrocity of which his passion made him guilty. He had no sooner, however, composed himself than he felt deeply abashed at his conduct, and told Elia, whose fidelity and long services had made him strongly attached to him, that he would have done well had he avenged himself by beating him to death. Having seen the wound bound up, and things restored to order, he went to bed, leaving the door open which separated Elia's chamber from his own, and calling out to him as he lay down, that he was in bed, and that he might kill him before the morning if he chose, for he deserved it. "But Elia," says he, "was not less a hero than myself, and the only vengeance he took was to preserve two little phials filled with the blood which had spouted from the wound, and often to show them to me, which he continued to do for many years. This reciprocal mixture of fierceness and generosity on both our parts, can hardly be understood by those who are unacquainted with the manners and customs of us

Piedmontese." His concluding observation on this affair is not less characteristic of his disposition, so singularly compounded of pride and the love of freedom, generosity and passion. "I have never beaten any one who served me," says he, "except as I should have done it to an equal, and never with a stick, or any thing but my fist, or my chair, or something which fell immediately to hand, as boys are accustomed to arm themselves when provoked. On the very few occasions also that this has happened, I should always have praised and esteemed the servants who had saluted me again with a beating, since I never thought of striking a servant in my character as master, but as one man quarrelling with another man."

Alfieri left Madrid in December, having refused to go to court, from some dislike of the Sardinian minister, who had arrived in Spain about the same time as himself. He proceeded to Lisbon, and, during his residence there of five weeks, became acquainted with the Abate Tommaso di Caluso, younger brother of the Ambassador from Turin. This circumstance produced a memorable change in the mind of our poet. The amiable manners of the Abate, and his elegant conversation, rendered his society delightful even to the fastidious

Alfieri, who neglected every species of public amusement to pass his evenings at his house. Another characteristic of the Abate's disposition, and which was especially agreeable to his new acquaintance, was the mildness and forbearance with which he conversed with those far inferior to himself in knowledge and ability. "It was on one of those most sweet evenings," says Alfieri, "that I experienced in the deepest recesses of my mind and heart a genuine impulse from Phœbus—an enthusiastic ravishment for the art of poetry. It was however, but a short-lived flame, and it lay extinguished under the ashes for many years." He then relates the circumstance which gave birth to this sudden fervour. "The most excellent and complaisant Abate was reading to me that magnificent Ode to Fortune, by Guidi, a poet of whom I had not till then even heard the name. Some stanzas of that canzone, especially the beautiful one on Pompey, transported me to such a degree, that the good Abate persuaded himself and told me that I was born to make verses, and that if I studied I should make excellent ones: but that momentary excitement having passed away, I found all the faculties of my mind so rusted, that I did not believe such a thing at all possible." Notwith-

standing, however, the discouraging tone of the last sentence, it is easy to discover, from the succeeding pages of the confessions, that he was thenceforth bent upon seeking intellectual improvement in a manner he had never before practised; and that he from that time began to set a due value upon the productions of his countrymen.

In the May of 1772 he again arrived in his native town, after an absence of three years. His health had suffered considerably from over-exertion in his journey on horseback through Spain: he now, therefore, resolved to pass some time in tranquillity, and, with this intention, took a magnificent house under the Piazza di S. Carlo, and which was furnished in a style of extraordinary splendour. All his old and favourite associates of the Academy flocked around him, and a new Academy was formed, of which the sole purpose was to promote frolic and enjoyment. The "August sessions" of this society were held at the house of Alfieri, because it was more spacious and elegant than those belonging to the rest of the company. One of the rules of the institution was, that the members should contribute whatever wit or knowledge they possessed for the amusement of the general assembly, on certain evenings; and for this pur-

pose papers were written on every variety of topics, and deposited in a chest, of which the President, chosen weekly, kept the key. "These papers," says Alfieri, "were all written, to our misfortune, and mine especially, I will not say in the French language, but in French words." He contributed a full proportion of the essays himself, and obtained great applause from his companions, especially for a scene in which he described a universal judgement, representing the Deity as demanding of all the various animals an account of themselves, while the portraits which he drew of well-known characters in Turin were loudly admired for their spirit and fidelity.

The success of this satiric attempt gave birth to wishes and hopes, at the same time, that he might one day write something which should deserve to live. Satire at first seemed to him the species of composition he ought to choose; but, after reflecting on the subject, he rejected this idea, convinced that satire is but too frequently the product of mere private malignity, and knowing that, in the greater number of instances, it can acquire only a momentary popularity. While considering, however, in what manner he should become an author, he was again made captive by the

lures of some skilful practiser in the court of love; and literature, his companions, and even his adorable horses, as he terms them, were forgotten. Thus it continued till the month of February 1775, when he was assailed by a dangerous malady, which the physicians, finding it difficult to resist its progress, said he must have invented purposely for himself.

The recovery of his health was attended with that of his prudence and regard for literature. The first step he took was to free himself from the fetters imposed by his subjection to martial law. These certainly lay lightly enough on his shoulders, as, of the eight years during which he had borne his Majesty's commission, he had spent four out of the country, and had scarcely been seen in the regiment five times while at Turin. It was not, therefore, the trouble he found in being a soldier which occasioned his disgust, but his acknowledged hatred of being, even in appearance, an instrument of arbitrary power. He applied to the Colonel for permission to retire on the plea of ill health. The Colonel begged him to consider what he was doing before taking such a step; and, to act with proper politeness, he pretended to reflect on the subject a fortnight longer, at the end of which

time, as he declared that his wish remained unaltered, he obtained the desired liberation.

He still, however, continued as subject as ever to love, and the object of his affections falling dangerously sick in the January of 1774, he passed both night and day in attendance at her bed-side. It was to wile away the weary hours he thus spent, for conversation was forbidden the sick lady, that he began to compose his first dramatic sketch, named "Cleopatra," without knowing, he says, what he intended to make, whether a tragedy or comedy, or whether it was to be in one, five, or ten acts. But some dialogues were speedily composed, and they exhibited sufficient feeling to induce Alfieri to believe that his rude and hasty attempt was superior to a tragedy on the same subject by the Cardinal Delfino. As soon, however, as it was finished, he became indifferent as to its fate, and it lay buried under the cushion of his mistress's couch for about a year, when on determining to free himself from her trammels, he again turned his thoughts to literature, wrote a sonnet on his recovery from love, made himself a close prisoner in his house that he might not be again ensnared, and, finally, on re-examining the Cardinal's tragedy above mentioned, resolved to

make the experiment of extending his fragment, and employing it as a medium for developing the affections to which he was himself a victim. In order that nothing might induce him to leave home, he had recourse to the singular expedient of making Elia bind him fast to his chair. When his friends came to see him, he covered the bandage with his dressing-gown, and induced them to suppose, by his studious air, that he had no stronger necessity to keep his seat than extreme anxiety not to dissipate his thoughts. Reading, however, became so agreeable to him, that Elia in a little time was able to trust to his keeping within-doors without binding him. About the same time also he wrote a poem against love, which he recited in the character of Apollo at a masquerade, submitting, he observes, to that exposure that he might have an additional reason studiously to avoid falling again into the snares from which he had so lately escaped.

The tragedy, in the mean time, was carried to a conclusion. He immediately sent a portion of it to his friend, father Pacianda, a man of prudence and good taste, who read it with attention, and returned it with the most incorrect passages carefully noted. This but inflamed Alfieri's desire of producing something more worthy of approbation,

and he lost no time in thoroughly revising the different scenes of his drama, which, curious to be said, was performed at Turin, June 16, 1775. The tragedy was followed by a farce, to which he gave the title of "The Poets," and though he makes merry with both these productions, he observes, that they were not the follies of a fool, but were here and there sprinkled with wit and poetry. Both the play and farce were received with approbation, and performed two successive evenings. This unexpected success operated in different ways on the mind of the author: its first effect was to make him conscious of possessing powers which were at present not properly developed, and on which account, he prevented the farther performance of the plays in question,—the second effect was to make him resolve to seek eminence as a dramatist, whatever the difficulties were which might oppose his pursuit.

It was with these feelings he commenced what he terms the fourth epoch of his life, which is dated from the year 1775. I have been particular in giving as many details as possible respecting the preceding periods, as they serve to show the personal character of this great man in its original elements, and before it was in any degree affected

by the pursuits of literature, or the admiration of the world; and, more especially, because Alfieri was, in this respect, one of the most remarkable men that ever existed, having grown up into a poet of vast power and genius before he began to exercise the art; for the melancholy dreamings, the crowd of thoughts that possessed his mind in the solitudes whether of the North or the South, the principles which always animated his heart with the love of liberty, the wild feeling which kept him waking as he travelled night after night under the glare of the northern meteors, the delight which animated him as he travelled through the pastoral villages of England, and above all, his admiration, even from infancy, of whatever was beautiful,—these, the genuine attributes of the poetic nature, had been all gathering strength in Alfieri's soul for many years past; and at the period at which we are now arrived they were matured, and the father of Italian tragedy was like an eagle full-winged for a flight across the ocean, but waiting for the impulse of the proper season to send it from its nest.

Alfieri gives an account of the capital with which he began life as a dramatist, and says, that it consisted of a resolute, obstinate, and indomitable spirit; of a heart full of and abounding in every

species of affection, among which appeared, mixed in strange confusion, love and all its furies, and a fierce, deep-seated rage against and abhorrence of every kind of tyranny. To which simple instinct of Nature was added a weak and uncertain recollection of various French tragedies which he had seen at the theatre many years before.

But many as were the advantages Alfieri possessed as a poetical being, and one whose language would naturally be poetry as soon as he had learned its elements, he was almost wholly destitute of those acquirements by which he was to make his conceptions wear the forms by which they might become palpable or intelligible to the world. He knew nothing of the theoretical rules of his art; he had read scarcely any of the poets; he was almost as ignorant as a child of the principles of grammar, and to crown the whole, was very imperfectly acquainted with his mother tongue. But he had vowed to use all the strength of his being to obtain the object of his wishes, and he instantly put his resolution to the proof by beginning the study of grammar. He also put into Italian two new tragedies, "Il Filippo" and "Il Polinice," which he had some time before written in French prose: but such was the difficulty he found in trans-

lating his own thoughts, that nobody recognized the Italian as an intended version of the French. These exercises he accompanied with the study of Dante, Tasso, Ariosto and Petrarch, in reading whose poems he made marks against the passages which pleased him, or which contained any thing peculiar either in the mode of expression or in the sound of the verse. Dante and Petrarch, however, were at first too difficult to afford him pleasure in the perusal, and the reading even of Tasso wearied him at first more than composition. But the translation of Ossian by Cesarotti, was soon after placed in his hands, and he was captivated by the grandeur of the blank verse, in which the author of the version so eminently excelled. While reading these works he had a constant regard to his preponderating taste for the drama, and he continually asked both himself and his friends how it happened that the language which in Dante, in the translation of Cesarotti, and other works, appeared so sublime and energetic, was so weak and unimpressive in the mouths of those who had attempted to write tragedies?

Having employed himself for some months in these Italian studies, he determined to refresh his knowledge of Latin, and for that purpose engaged

a tutor, with whom he read the tragedies of Seneca, and Latin translations of the Greek tragedians, and even condescended to be put into Phædrus again. Soon, however, returning to the ardent study of Italian, he resolved as the surest and speediest method of acquiring its most perfect idioms to take up his abode in Tuscany, and in April 1776 he proceeded to that state. During his stay at Pisa, where he spent six or seven weeks, he formed the plan of the tragedy of Antigone, and found himself so rapidly improving in Tuscan, that he was able to develope the plot in very respectable prose. He also versified the Polinice and the Filippo, and on his reading them to some of the literary men of the place, obtained much greater praise than he expected, or could be made to believe he deserved. His next effort was a simple translation of Horace's Art of Poetry, which he undertook for the sake of fixing the excellent rules it contains in his memory. On his arrival at Florence, he continued his study of language with more ardour than ever, constantly conversing with the best speakers, and committing to memory several long passages of the most admired poets.

After a residence of several weeks in the Tuscan capital, he returned to Turin, where, however, he

had remained but a short time when he again found it necessary to leave that city, and take up his residence at Siena, it being in Tuscany alone that he could pursue the favourite object of his studies with satisfactory success. Machiavelli, whose works his friend Gori had recommended to him, now became his constant companion, as Sallust had been a month or two before; and full of enthusiastic admiration for the sentiments of his author, he sat down to the composition of the "Tirannide," of which work he speaks with respect in his latest years, not for any propriety or elegance in its style, but for its exhibiting the sentiments of his mind while he was still young and inspired with all the glowing and independent feelings of youth. Various tragedies, as the Congiura de' Pazzi, the Orestes, and Virginia, with some others, were all in progress or under correction at the same period; and our author found himself as deeply involved in literary cares as if he had been a scholar from his infancy.

From Siena he went, at the end of about five months, to Florence, where a circumstance occurred which makes an important figure in his Confessions, and which, in fact, gave another colouring to his feelings through life. The Countess of Albany, who

occasioned this change, resided at that time with her husband at Florence, and was about twenty-five years of age, amiable, accomplished, and beautiful. Owing to some violent dissimilarity of manners and sentiments between this lady and her consort, the former passed a life of continual vexation, and was on many occasions exposed to a treatment which threatened her with personal injury. Soon after his arrival at Florence, Alfieri became a visitor at the house of this ill-sorted pair, and an intimacy arose between him and the Countess, which, though free from the slightest taint of dishonourable feeling, induced him to take part in her defence, when her husband gave way one evening to an ebullition of rage more violent than usual. By his advice, temperate and cautious lest it should give birth to unjust suspicions, she obtained permission to retire to a convent in Florence, but from which she soon after removed to one in Rome. This departure of a person for whom he had conceived an affection so deep and violent as his always were, filled Alfieri with grief; and Florence, admired as it had hitherto been, seemed to have lost all its charms. The sacrifice, indeed, which he had made to enable him to reside there permanently was one which only a man like Alfieri

could have found it in his heart to offer. His hatred of constraint and of every appearance of arbitrary power has been already repeatedly mentioned, but this sentiment grew every day stronger, and when he remembered that, having become an author, he could not print his books either at Turin or any other city without the special permission of his sovereign; that he was subject to punishment if he disobeyed this law, and that he could not even leave the circumscribed limits of his country without particular leave from the Government, he made the magnanimous resolve of giving up all the estates of which the possession entailed upon him this degrading vassalage. Immediately on coming to this determination, he wrote to his sister and her husband on the subject, and desired them, as the former was the next heir, to expedite the business as speedily as possible. The plan on which he wished to proceed was, that his sister should allow him an annual pension, which, with some other trifling property, would leave him master of about half the income he at present possessed. After a long and troublesome correspondence, during which Alfieri saw reason to fear that he might have reduced himself to beggary by his proceedings, the affair was concluded to his sa-

tisfaction, and having sold off his plate and furniture, and even his favourite horses, he began leading a life of the most severe economy. It is amusing to find him relating the various thoughts which passed through his mind when in the worst state of doubt respecting the issue of his negotiation. The only business he could think of by which he should be able to maintain himself, was that of a horse-breaker, of which, he says, he considered himself to be perfectly master. "It also seemed to me," he continues, "to be more consistent with that of a poet, it being much easier to write a tragedy in a stall than in a Court."

Soon after the departure of the Countess for Rome, he hastened to Siena, trusting that the journey and change of scene might restore his tranquillity. He shortly after pursued his way to Rome, where he had only the sad satisfaction of conversing with the Countess for some minutes through a grate. After staying, therefore, but a few days, he proceeded to Naples, where, at the end of five or six weeks, he learnt that the Countess had obtained the Pope's consent to her living separate from her husband and at freedom. This intelligence again took him to Rome, where he determined to

establish his residence, and pursue his literary occupations with more industry than ever.

He had proposed to himself at an early period of his career to limit the number of his intended tragedies to twelve, and at the beginning of the year 1782 he found his task completed, except as he intended to correct and re-correct what he had written, in doing which he took the dramas in hand one after the other, in the order in which they had been composed. But in the February of the same year, the Merope of Maffei attracting his notice, he was enraged at discovering how miserable a production had obtained the reputation, and a reputation which could not be refused it, of having excelled all other Italian tragedies that had as yet appeared. With this feeling he sate down to compose one on the same subject as Maffei's, and about a month after began the sacred drama of Saul; and such was the pleasure he took in the completion of these new and sudden designs, that he observes they cost him less time and less fatigue than any of the rest. Towards the end of the year he had the satisfaction also of seeing his "Antigone" performed at a private theatre before an audience composed of the first people in Rome. It was received with the highest applause, and,

thus encouraged, at the beginning of 1783 he sent four of his tragedies to press.

Finding that his constant visits to the Countess had given rise to scandal, he took the magnanimous resolution of leaving Rome for some time, and with a heavy heart set out on a long tour, in the course of which he visited Paris at Milan, and became closely attached to that warm-hearted man and excellent writer. He then proceeded to Siena, where he had six more of his tragedies printed, but in seeing them through the press he suffered a torment, from the want of practice in correcting and revising proofs, as intolerable as it was new and strange.

It is not a little amusing to find that amid all the serious occupations in which he was thus engaged, and while suffering the deepest affliction on account of his separation from the object of his affections, his fondness for horses continued unabated. Wishing at this time some amusement which might distract his mind from too much thought, he resolved upon making a journey to England, for the sole purpose of purchasing a stud. Hither he accordingly came, and buying no less than fourteen of his favourite animals, he spent four months in London, occupying his whole time

in the luxurious enjoyment of fine riding, and in writing letters to his friends.

With his fourteen horses, which, being young and spirited, were by no means a slight charge, he passed through France to his native city of Turin, where he was received by the King more graciously than he had reason to expect would be the case; but after remaining there a few days he again hastened to Siena, where he received intelligence that the Countess had been permitted to leave Rome, and was on her way into Alsatia. But a very short period was suffered to elapse before he was on the road to Germany; and having at length satisfied himself again with a sight of the only woman for whom he seems to have ever felt a genuine and strong affection, he experienced a new impulse of poetic vigour, and though he had resolved never to write another tragedy, commenced three new ones, that is, the Agide, Sofonisba, and Mirra. But the tranquillity which he had expected to enjoy for some weeks near the Countess, was suddenly interrupted by the intelligence of his friend Gori's death; and after a few days, occupied in lamenting the loss he had suffered by the decease of so valuable an acquaintance, he returned to Italy.

Alfieri's mode of spending his time was now more unsettled than ever, and having been continually changing his residence from one place to another, as the whim of the moment or the news he received of the Countess dictated, we find him accompanying her from the village where she resided in Alsatia to Paris, at the end of 1786 or the beginning of the following year. They remained in France six months, and then returned to Alsatia; but in 1787 they again visited the French capital, where the printing of his tragedies, in six volumes, by Didot, obliged Alfieri to fix his residence for three years, a longer time than he had ever yet spent in France. During that period the Count of Albany died, and the object of our poet's long and ardent affection was left at liberty to unite herself with him in a less suspicious manner than was at present the case; but whether Alfieri and the Countess of Albany were ever married or not, remains an impenetrable secret even to the most curious inquirers.

While he was attending to the printing of his tragedies in Paris, his miscellaneous productions appeared in Germany from the press of the celebrated Kehl; but before he could see a termination to the labour he had spent on the edition of the

tragedies, the Revolution was making rapid strides through France, and every class of persons being too unsettled to pursue their ordinary occupations with regularity, Didot was unable to keep his men at work, and Alfieri dreaded every hour to see the fruits of his long exertion swept away in an instant. The Countess, in the mean time, dreading the effects of the popular commotion, persuaded him to bring her to England, which she had never seen; but this country had not the attractions for her which she had imagined it to possess from the eloquent eulogiums of Alfieri; they, therefore, shortly returned to Paris, and witnessed the terrible scenes which took place in that capital on the eventful tenth of August 1792.

With great difficulty they succeeded in obtaining passports to quit the country; and it was only by Alfieri's taking the wise precaution of setting out two days before he had mentioned, and leaving his books, his horses, and other effects behind, that they effected their escape. On the 3rd of November they arrived in Florence, where our poet, having by this time fully satisfied his love of wandering, resolved to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity. He was therefore no sooner recovered from the fatigues he had lately undergone,

than he resumed his studies and the composition of new pieces, or the revision of those already before the world. But the most remarkable instance of his perseverance in the pursuit of the excellence he had proposed to obtain, remains to be told. He was now forty-six years of age, a period of life at which few men think of commencing, from the very elements, any new and difficult species of study. But Alfieri would refuse no labour, by undergoing which he might add either grace or strength to that intellect, in the improvement and enlarging of which he felt that the true nobility of his being consisted. After endeavouring, therefore, to discover the beauties of the Greek poets in literal translations, and becoming convinced that the image reflected through such a medium must be a very incorrect or imperfect one, he determined, about two years after, that is in 1796, to begin the study of Greek; and so ardently did he apply himself, that in a short time he was able to read almost any author in the language. Several of the noblest dramas he translated, and the energetic beauty of the "Alcestes" of Euripides struck him so forcibly, that he once more broke his vow, and wrote a new tragedy on the same subject.

Fully occupied with these and other objects of

the same kind, he lived in great comfort and contentedness, seeing no reason to dread any interruption to his felicity, till the progress of the French arms made him tremble for the liberty of Tuscany; and their near approach to Florence compelled him to retreat with the Countess to a country villa in the neighbourhood. There he continued studying and composing with the same indefatigable energy as before, till Florence was evacuated by the invaders, when he returned to his former residence. But in October 1800, the French, on whom he heaps the most abusive epithets that language can produce, once more occupied the city. Instead, however, of his being treated with harshness, the General of the army politely sent to request that he would visit him, expressing his desire to do honour to a man of whom fame spoke so highly. To this Alfieri replied, that, if he commanded him on the strength of his authority to attend him, he would obey; but that, if he merely invited him as an individual, he must excuse his seeing him.

In the September of this year he was impressed with an irresistible desire to write comedies; and he accordingly sat down, and in a short time had drawn out a sketch of six, of which four, he

says, were representative of the manners of the age, one fantastic, and another light and farcical. In the year 1802 he put these comedies into verse, and laboured so hard at this undertaking, and the constant study of Greek, making literal translations into Latin from the tragedians, from Pindar and Homer, that he greatly injured his health, which now began to show symptoms of rapid decline. Such, however, was his satisfaction at the triumph he had acquired in the pursuit of Greek literature for the last seven years, that, in a half serious and half comic humour, he invented a collar, which was to be worn as the ensign of a new species of chivalry, designated the Homeric Order.

With this little incident, which shows how easily the mind of a great man may be amused, even after it has long learned to despise the follies of the world, Alfieri closes his Confessions. The date of the concluding paragraph is May 14th, 1803; and on the 18th of October in the same year, this celebrated writer terminated his career. From a letter of his friend, the Abate di Caluso, to whom he was strongly attached, we learn that his death was occasioned by the gout in his stomach, to which his frame, exhausted by over-study, offered no resistance; that he continued, even to the last few days

of his life, intent on the correction of his works, notwithstanding the persuasions of the Countess to the contrary; and that his memory and all the other faculties of his mind continued unimpaired to the moment of his death. The Countess, for whom his regard was never diminished, attended him with care and affection throughout his illness. Shortly before his decease he recited to her, as she sat by his bed-side, several verses from a translation of Hesiod, and no apprehension was entertained of immediate danger. When he felt the symptoms of death hastening upon him, she happened to be out of the room, but, being immediately sent for, he stretched out his hand as she approached him, saying, "Clasp my hand, dear friend, I am dying," and almost instantly expired. His burial took place in the Church of Santa Croce, where were already deposited the remains of Machiavelli and Michael Angelo. The Countess of Albany soon after raised an elegant monument to his memory, the work of the great Canova.

The character of Alfieri has been already sufficiently displayed; and the same expression may be applied to it which has been used to distinguish the style of his writings, namely, that it has not the appearance of a coloured surface, but of a

substance that has been cut with a sharp and fearless graver. We cannot, unfortunately, trace any signs of religious feeling in his Confessions; and there are, it is to be regretted, too many incidents in his life which admit of no justification, and which even bring into doubt the very qualities for which we are most inclined to admire him. Frankness, generosity, freedom of thought, and a love of truth, must have but a weak hold of the heart that can easily practise all the opposite vices to gain some object of lowborn desire. Something, however, must be allowed to Alfieri in palliation of his errors. In a man of the world mercy, he would not have had this apology; but, as an Italian noble, bred up with little knowledge of rational religion, and left free at an early age, to form his own principles, he must be judged with far less severity than should have been the case had he grown up to manhood in a country where morality has a more healthful nourishment than in Italy. There are, moreover, many points in Alfieri's character which engage our affections on his side. There was a degree of grandeur in his love of independence, which we cannot contemplate without a glow of admiration; while the deep melancholy with which he was habitually affected, and which sent him to muse so often "in

lone cathedral aisles," or exposed him to an afflicting violence of passion, tempers our admiration of his free spirit, of the generosity of his nature, and of the strength of mind he displayed in his studies, with a feeling of pity, which presents the sublime and retiring poet to our imagination as one of the men, whom, of all others, we should choose to point out as a type or embodied image of his own tragedies.

As an author, Alfieri is justly placed among the greatest of his countrymen, with whom, in point of sentiment and elevation of feeling, he may stand the most severe comparison. It was, indeed, to his power of delineating the passions which most strongly affect the human heart, that he owed his excellence; and knowing this, he intuitively placed his trust, not in a complication of incidents, or variety of personages, but in the energy with which he could inspire the few characters he introduced, and concentrate in a simple plot, and by his skill in the exhibition of passion, the most commanding and elevating sentiments.

Besides his tragedies, Alfieri wrote a variety of minor poems, several satires, a melo-tragedy, entitled "The Death of Abel," the prose treatises "Della Tirannide," and "Il Principe e le Let-

tere," both directed against arbitrary power; a volume to which he gave the name of "Misogallo," from the heterogeneous character of its contents; the comedies above mentioned, and several translations from the classics. These various works exhibit very different degrees of merit. His comedies and most of his miscellanea are considered wholly unworthy of his name. Only a few of his satires are exempted from the same censure; but his prose works are celebrated for the strong and unaffected language in which they are written. Of the translations, that which he made of Sallust is esteemed one of the best versions that exist of any author, or in any language: while that which he executed of Virgil, though three times attempted, is equally poor and spiritless. But when it is considered at what a comparatively late period Alfieri commenced these labours, how highly must we estimate the natural power and moral strength of his intellect, thus original and thus resolute and laborious.

The Life of Melchior Cesarotti.

Melchior Cesarotti.

The celebrity of Melchior Cesarotti is established on a firmer basis than that of the generality of writers, his equals in intellectual power. But extensive learning, none of which was left unemployed, and the union of his name with those of Homer and Ossian, may be regarded as the means by which he rose to a rank which few have attained without greater originality of mind.

This distinguished writer was born at Padua on the fifteenth of May, 1730.* His family was of

* Memorie intorno alla Vita ed agli Studi dell' Ab. Cesarotti dall' Ab. G. Barbieri ; Vita di Cesarotti, Opere Scelte, Milan ; and ' Opere, &c.' printed at Florence and Pisa in 40 volumes.

noble rank, but poor; and the only one of his ancestors of whom mention is made by his Italian biographers, was professor of jurisprudence in Parma, and subsequently Governor, first of Piacenza, and then of Parma itself; for his promotion to which dignity he was indebted to the patronage of the last of the Farnese princes. Melchior himself was destined from his childhood to the ecclesiastical profession, and commenced his studies, at a very early period, in the university of his native town. The passion for learning which characterized him through life, was displayed in his boyhood, and in a manner which his friends seem not to have expected. It was the custom of his parents, during the autumn vacations, to place him under the care of his uncle, a brother of the Franciscan monastery of Sant' Antonio. Whether this was intended for his pleasure or his profit does not appear, but the good monk was not always in a humour to bear with the sportive disposition of his nephew; and on these occasions he was accustomed to lock him up, a close prisoner, in the convent library. The natural curiosity of youth, and the absence of all other sources of amusement, would have led a much duller lad than Melchior to rummage the book-shelves; but he had an intuitive love of learning, and the monk soon found that he had

no need to carry away the key when he shut him into the library. Cesarotti, it is said, was fond of telling this story to his friends, and always spoke with the liveliest affection of his uncle; who, it appears, supplied by his care the deficiencies of Melchior's father—a man of indolent and expensive habits, who forgot in his self-indulgences the claims of his family.

Having completed the preliminary portion of his education, and with a mind already stored with much miscellaneous knowledge, he commenced the study of philosophy under Billesimo, who was at that time in the zenith of his fame, and had the reputation of being one of the most useful teachers in Italy. But whatever might be the extent of his learning, neither his method nor his taste, it seems, was such as to render his lessons attractive to a youth of Cesarotti's character; and it was only by the strong resistance which his ambition offered to his inclination, that the young poet was enabled to keep at the head of his fellow-students.

The course of education pursued at the University of Padua next led him to mathematics; but he had the same repugnance to overcome in respect to them, as he had encountered in listening to the instructions of Billesimo, and his mind thus remained for a considerable time without any

object before it of sufficient interest to urge it forward in the pursuit of truth. At length, however, a new scene was opened to him in the intellectual world; a work fell into his hands entitled "Della Saggezza," written by Pietro Charon, and in which many of the profoundest truths of philosophy, and those most deeply interesting to a youthful and imaginative mind, are discussed in a style far more bland and persuasive than was usual among the schoolmen of the day. In addition to the aids he derived from the study of this book, which at once furnished him with numerous topics of reflection, he soon after obtained the still greater advantage of a personal acquaintance with Giuseppe Toaldo; a man whose vast scientific acquirements did not prevent him from cultivating the friendship of those whose minds were devoted to learning of a lighter class.

The name of Toaldo is held at Padua, and with reason, in the highest estimation. He was born in the year 1719, at Pianezza, a little village near Vincenza, and was sent to Padua at the proper age to study theology. But he had not been long there before he was attracted to the pursuit of natural philosophy; and his subsequent appointment to the office of arch-priest in a neighbour-

ing church, enabled him to follow his inclination without neglecting his more serious employments. He had already, at the period of his advancement, prepared for the press an edition of the works of Galileo, with a preface and notes, and had had to contend with the bigotry of three censors, before he could obtain permission to publish the celebrated dialogues of his author on the system of the world. But his learning and perseverance overcame the obstacles which he continually found in his way, when endeavouring to promote the cause of science among his countrymen; and in the year 1762, he had the satisfaction of being chosen professor of physical geography and astronomy in the University of Padua. Ever attentive to the duties of his office, he projected the establishment of an observatory, and after a long struggle with numerous opponents, succeeded in carrying his wishes into effect.* His various works on natural science attest the power as well as the activity of his mind; and though Cesarotti had himself made so little progress in this department of learning, it is easy to conceive that he might hold in profound reverence a man, who could unite enthusiasm for the abstrusest studies,

* Biographie Universelle, art. Toaldo,

with an admiration of the most elegant. The manner in which he always spoke of him in after years proves how great an influence he must have exercised over his mind. In the inscription on the monument which he raised to his memory in his villa of Selvaggiano, he calls him by the endearing titles of friend and father, as well as master. 'My Socrates' was also another appellation which he commonly applied to him; and in a letter written to one of his acquaintances, soon after Toaldo's death, he says, 'I thank you from my heart for the sympathy you express at my loss of Toaldo. I have lost, indeed, the most ancient of my friends, the true father of my mind, the only philosopher among us in these times of universal darkness.'*

After having expended a short period in the study of jurisprudence and theology, Cesarotti finally devoted himself to the cultivation of general literature, and the ability he evinced quickly raised him to the chair of rhetoric, which had been already occupied by several men of the highest talents.† Thus, endowed with authority, and placed in a situation in which he was sure of making his voice heard among the learned men of his country, he began to express his bold, and, at that time, almost wholly

* Opere, vol. 40. page 29. † Memorie de Barbieri.

novel, doubts respecting the propriety of the close imitation of the ancients, which infected and lowered the style of his erudite cotemporaries. In conformity with this feeling on the subject of the classics, he resolved, it is said, from that time never to separate criticism from philosophy and the natural rules of taste, and to oppose, with all his power, the longer continuance of those pedantic rules which had been hitherto followed in the education of youth.* His opinions on this matter are found explained, with considerable humour, in a dialogue written at the period of which we are speaking, entitled Homines Histriones, and which forms part of his Latin Miscellanies.†

The honourable station to which he had been promoted in the University, excited him to make the most vigorous efforts in the farther improvement of his own mind; and in this he was greatly aided by the liberal admission he obtained to the constant use of the celebrated Biblioteca Volpiana. Amid the treasures of that extensive and valuable library, he employed all the hours in which he was not engaged with his professional duties; and the mass of learning which he thereby accumulated, formed by far the greater portion of that intellectual

* Vita, ed. Milan. † Opere, vol. 31, p. 291.

wealth, from the stores of which he, in after years, drew the materials of his multifarious productions. His industry was unceasing. Not contented with the perusal of the works which attracted his attention, he submitted to the labour of making copious extracts from them with his own hand; and when he found himself unable, by his single exertions, to multiply these transcripts so rapidly as he wished, he called in the aid of his pupils, and, by their means, speedily filled his cases with abridgements of the most useful authors.

In the year 1754 he appeared for the first time before the public in the character of a translator, and presented it with a version of the Prometheus of Æschylus. His undertaking this work is ascribed to the persuasions of one of his acquaintances, Paolo Brazolo, a man as distinguished for his profound knowledge of Greek literature, as Cesarotti's other friend, Giuseppe Toaldo, was for his science. Brazolo himself was a translator, and had such an enthusiastic admiration of Homer, that he had twice rendered the Iliad into Italian; but, too thoroughly possessed by the inimitable grandeur of the original to be satisfied with Homer in any other language than Greek, he had each time committed the result of his laborious undertaking to the flames.

Cesarotti's version of the Prometheus gave no promise, it is said, of his future celebrity as a translator: it was weak and prosaic; and he was himself sufficiently sensible of its utter want of merit not to allow it a place in the general edition of his works. He had at the time, however, a more favourable opinion of his success, as he soon after undertook the translation of Voltaire's Mahomet, and Death of Cæsar, to which he added that of the Semiramide. These were executed in a somewhat better style than the Prometheus; but, according to the judgment of those of his countrymen who are best qualified to decide on their merits, they possess no great claim to consideration. Alfieri was not a little amused when, several years after, on sending a volume of his own tragedies to our author, and requesting him to point out some model of tragic verse, he received an answer from him in which it was indicated that he could find no better example than the work of which we are speaking. "It is not necessary that I should make any observation on this circumstance," says Alfieri; "every body can form his own judgment, and compare Cesarotti's verses with mine: they may also compare his versification in Ossian, and see if it appear to proceed from the same manufacture. But this fact will serve to prove

what miserable creatures all men, and especially we authors, are, who have always in our hands paper and pen to describe others, but have never a mirror in which to observe and form a judgment of ourselves."*

That Cesarotti did not succeed better in his translations of Voltaire's tragedies is not to be attributed to any want of enthusiasm for his author. Zaire, which he did not attempt to render into Italian, is said to have so deeply affected him, that he read it four times, constantly bathed in tears, and still unable to satiate himself with its beauties. The admiration of his friend and eulogist Barbieri for this celebrated tragedy appears to be not less than Cesarotti's. "He hereby gave," says that writer in the memoir to which we owe the above anecdote, "a great lesson to those who believe themselves predestinated by the Muses to the noble ministry of poetry. Let them read Zaire; if they be not melted into tears, if they be not impelled to read it again and again, either the whole or in part, if the subject do not haunt them day and night, at home and abroad, alone and with others, let them cease to flatter themselves—let them bid adieu to poetry."†

* Vita. Epoca Quarta, Cap. XV. † Memorie, Opere, vol. 40. p. 54.

But in whatever light the early productions of Cesarotti may now be considered, they had the effect of making him known to several persons of distinction. His pupils performed the tragedies, which were not yet published, in the theatre of the university, with considerable applause; and this, together with the excellent manner in which he had attended to the duties of his professorship, rendered him popular far beyond the limits of his own academy. The consequence was, an invitation from an illustrious and noble family at Venice, the younger branches of which required his assistance as a private preceptor. There was something too flattering in this proposal for the young philosopher to be able to reject it; and he bade farewell to his beloved Padua and the library of Volpi.

Soon after he arrived at Venice he published his translations from Voltaire, and some pieces in prose. These were followed by his poems entitled La Purità, Il Cinto d' Imeneo, and Il Genio dell' Adria, together with some of an amatory character, which his more ardent admirers compare with those of Petrarch, a comparison of which the justness, perhaps, may be fairly disputed by others. That he was, however, at this time in some danger of losing a portion of his studious gravity, appears from a letter

written by him in January 1761 to his friend Toaldo, in which he repels the accusations that had induced the astronomer to send him an epistle full of admonitions. "Nothing," he says, "can be more out of place than your reproaches and advice. I am not in any way running wild, I again say. I have proved my firmness; there is not, and never will be, any thing in it." He then assures him that he rarely spent his evenings at the place in which he was said to pass most of his time; and, in allusion to his being in love, observes, "I fear not rivals, because I am not in the least degree in love! I fear not ridicule, for I give no one any occasion to ridicule me."*

It is not easy to say what were the precise subjects of Toaldo's remonstrances; but it is not difficult to conceive that a young man of Cesarotti's poetical temperament, finding himself suddenly surrounded by all the attractions of a fascinating city like Venice, might often wear a gayer look than he had been accustomed to do amid his pupils at Padua. His own assertion, that no other change had taken place in him except this, may be safely trusted to, and the active manner in which he was pursuing his schemes of literary ambition, affords a

* Opere, vol. 35. p. 8.

species of evidence in his favour which might have convinced even the mathematician himself.

Among his Venetian acquaintances were several persons of high distinction in the state, and others much celebrated for their literary acquirements; but, in the year 1762, he became acquainted with an English gentleman named Sackville, a circumstance to which he owed more than to any other event in his life, the establishment of his reputation as an author. The attention of the literary world in England was at that period wholly occupied with admiring or criticizing the poems of Ossian; and Mr. Sackville having received a copy from this country, and being among the warmest partisans of the Celtic bard, took the poem to Cesarotti, who was unacquainted with English, and amused himself by translating to him several passages of striking beauty and sublimity. Nothing could exceed the delight with which he was listened to by our author. Nor is it surprising that such was the effect on Cesarotti's mind. An ardent admirer of poetry, he found in Fingal the boldness and splendour of imagery in which the later productions of his own country were so singularly deficient; and what was still farther calculated to make him a dis-

ciple of Ossian, he had long stood conspicuously forward as the inveterate antagonist of the classical school. The discovery, consequently, of the existence of such poetry as that of the Northern hero, was scarcely less grateful to him than it would have been to Macpherson had he really found it among the wilds. His imagination, his taste, his love of theory, and, above all, his ambition, were each interested in the display of the new poetic world; and but a short time elapsed before he formed the bold determination of tuning the silver harp of Italy to a key in which it had never yet been struck.

With the assistance of his friend Sackville, he was enabled to carry his project into execution; and having translated, with a trifling exception, all that Macpherson had at the time published, he was fortunate enough to find in Lord Bute a patron sufficiently liberal to pay the expenses of the publication, leaving him the proceeds. The letter which he wrote to Macpherson himself is, to an English reader, among the most curious in his voluminous collection. The following is a translation of its principal passages.

"Allow me, Sir," says he, "in common with all Italy, to congratulate you on the fortunate dis-

covery you have made of a new world of poetry, and on the precious treasures with which you have enriched literature. You have a great claim to the gratitude of your country, and the public ought to acknowledge themselves indebted to you for your travels and your labours. It is to have done something much better than introduce a sterile plant, or a rusty medal. I cannot for my own part sufficiently express my delight. Your Ossian has made me all at once an enthusiast. Morven is become my Parnassus, and Lora my Hippocrene. I dream continually of your heroes ; I discourse with those children of song ; I walk with them from hill to hill ; and your rocks crowned with gnarled oaks and perpetual mists, your stormy skies, your roaring torrents, your sterile deserts, your fields covered but with thistles, this grand and mournful spectacle has more charms for my eyes than the island of Calypso and the gardens of Alcinous. A dispute has been long kept up, and with more virulence perhaps than good faith, respecting the superiority of ancient or modern poetry. Ossian, I believe, will give advantage to the cause of the former, without rendering much aid to the partisans of the ancients. He proves by his example how superior the poetry of nature and sentiment is to the poetry of reflection

and wit, which seem to be the property of the moderns. But if it demonstrates the superiority of ancient poetry, it at the same time makes us perceive the defects of the ancient poets, better than any critique. Scotland has shown us a Homer who neither sleeps nor babbles, who is never either coarse or languid, but always grand, always simple, rapid, precise, equal, and varied. But it is not for me to praise Ossian to him who has rendered his beauties with so much force and exactness that he may be taken for a model. I will rather tell you, Sir, that I am thinking of following your steps, and transferring these poems into my maternal language; that is to say, into Italian blank verse. Not that I flatter myself with being able to approach the inimitable beauties of this great genius: but I hope by these means to fill my mind more completely with the spirit of my model, and the peculiarities of his style."

Having thus expressed himself, he describes the numerous disputes which had taken place among the learned men of his country respecting the authenticity of the poems in question. The ruling opinion was against the supposition of their antiquity; and Cesarotti is not sparing of his anger at the prejudices which his erudite cotemporaries thus exhibited.

"There are, however," he says, "some among them, whose good sense and penetration teach them to regard this dispute with indifference; who would not be sorry to owe to the age in which we live this excellent production, and who would find much more force of mind in a modern who should have been able to transform himself into Ossian, than in Ossian himself."

In concluding this curious epistle he says, "As for myself, were I permitted to doubt after reading your testimony, I would say, that as I recognise in these poems a grandeur, and a simplicity, which have in themselves the strongest impress of nature, I also find in them an ingenuity of design, an order so delicately irregular, so wise a moderation in the boldest flights, a precision so constant and so fertile, a justice so exact in seizing that precious medium so difficult to preserve, a choice, moreover, of objects and characters so delicate and judicious, that the most consummate art appears to have been employed, an art which knows how to refine nature without changing her. Whatever may be thought of it, the thing is in every sense wonderful; but modern Great Britain is known to be fruitful in miracles of mind, and it may be permitted to doubt whether Scotland was so in the

third century. Whether it be from reason, scrupulousness, or indulgence for the feebleness of others, I cannot refrain myself, Sir, from asking you a question, and I beg you will not think me presumptuous. In good faith, Sir, ought I to admire you as a man full of light and ingenuity, or ought I to revere in you the greatest painter of nature? If it be so, I shall be far from complaining as Scaliger did against Muret. Whether Ossian be ancient or not, he will always be so in style. Those who thus judge cannot be mistaken. However it be, Sir, if my boldness obtain for me the honour of a reply, I shall feel that I have gained a great deal, and shall glory in it accordingly."*

Macpherson, in a letter dated London, 4th May, 1763,† expressed the pleasure he had received from the praises of Cesarotti, and at the same time forwarded him a second volume of Ossian, in the introduction to which the Abate would find, he said, arguments sufficient to convince him of the authenticity of the poems. Our author acknowledged the receipt of the present in the most grateful terms, in a letter to Sackville. "I have received," he says, "the new book of Ossian, to-

* Opere, vol. 35. pp. 9–14. † Nota. vol. 35. p. 313.

gether with the English Dictionary, for which you will thank Cargirelli in my name. The principal thing I read is this poem, and yesterday I nearly finished it. It would be useless to endeavour to give a detail of the various beauties of every kind with which it abounds; whilst to enable you to conceive a just idea of it in general, it is only necessary to say that it is equal, and perhaps superior to that other splendid production, Fingal. The character, the sentiments, the images, the rapidity, the conduct; in a word, all that which constitutes Ossian the first of poets, abounds in this poem, to a degree more than eminent." After mentioning the notes and dissertation with praise, he continues. "As far as I am concerned, I shall commence translating immediately; I should be glad to know whether I ought to begin with the dissertation or the poem. With one or the other, I will certainly commence doing something, if it be only for the sake of a beginning."*

In a letter sent him by the Abbé Taruffi, and dated Boulogne, 19th March, 1765, mention is made of the enthusiasm with which his version was received in France. "Your Ossian," says the good Abbé, "has a crowd of admirers here. It is a

* Page 15.

literary phenomenon which astonishes all the curious. Nothing can be more sublime than your versification, it flows with the same noble dignity as its admirable original. We are burning to know if you will translate the third volume which Mr. Macpherson, we understand, has sent you for that purpose. The public has its eyes upon you, Sir, and you must not pause in such a noble career: your generous freedom in attacking ancient prejudices, and that blind veneration for the poet of Achilles, is highly admired. You cannot be reproached as Dacier did De la Mothe for his not knowing Greek, and not being able therefore to judge properly of Homer. You know your Homer by heart; you are an enlightened Grecian, and yet you fall not on your knees before him." He then mentions that a nobleman of high rank, and an intimate friend of Voltaire, had read his Ossian with transport, and gives him to understand that he may soon expect to hear news in consequence.

In his answer to this letter, Cesarotti requests to know if Voltaire had received the specimen he had sent him by Goldoni of the translation of two of his tragedies. In regard to Ossian he says, "I had in truth almost forgotten my work, and I know not if I shall be able to resume it for some time. The

task is a laborious one, as you well know, and I have not near so much leisure as it demands." Voltaire, it may be mentioned, acknowledged the honour which had been conferred on him by Cesarotti, in the most flattering terms. In the year 1772 also the translation of Ossian was completed, and appeared at Padua in four volumes octavo, accompanied by a long preface, and a considerable body of critical and explanatory notes. The reception it met with was as flattering as the author could desire. With the exception of a few faithful adherents to the sovereign bards of antiquity, the public expressed themselves in terms of unqualified admiration at the sombre grandeur of Northern song. The young and imaginative were enraptured with the poetry itself, but the more temperate and critical were almost equally charmed with the mingled force and elegance of the translator's blank verse. Both the work and the author thus became firmly rooted in the affections of the Italian public. Scarcely indeed had the first part appeared, when Cesarotti was invited by the minister of the grand duke of Parma to accept the Greek professorship in the university of that city; but he had declined it, and was immediately after promoted to the united professorships of Greek and Hebrew in Padua.

He was thus placed in a situation which left him perfectly at liberty to pursue the occupations in which his mind was absorbed; and, from the period in which the complete version of Ossian appeared, that is the year 1772, to the time of his death, he continued to labour with indefatigable diligence. A version of Gray's Elegy stands the first on the list; then follows a translation of Demosthenes, in four volumes, with copious notes, which abound, in conformity with his general opinions on the subject of the classics, with objections to the author. This work is succeeded by some minor productions, which he wrote in his capacity of Secretary to the Academy of Sciences; and then comes the twofold translation of Homer, the work by which, next to his Ossian, he is best known to the general reader. Not less than ten octavo volumes are occupied with these versions, the former of which is in literal prose, and the latter in verse, but so altered, as to the plan of the poem, by the omission or transposition of various passages, that he thought fit to change its name, and call it not the Iliad, but the Death of Hector. A new Vocabulary of the Italian Language, the Lives of the first Hundred Popes, a few minor essays, a poem on Providence, entitled Pronea, a translation of Juvenal, and a long se-

ries of letters, form the concluding division of the productions of this active writer, the complete edition of whose works extend to no fewer than forty octavo volumes.

Scarcely an event occurred through the whole of Cesarotti's life to disturb the repose of his studious retirement; and the even temperament of his disposition combined to allow him as much inward as outward tranquillity. "Here are my sonnets," he says, in a letter to one of his friends; "the subjects of them agreeably occupy my mind, without leaving the least trace on my heart;" a sentence which will go far towards making us acquainted with both his personal and literary character. The only circumstances which varied the perfect uniformity of his life after his return to Padua, were his undertaking a short tour, in which he visited Florence, Rome, and Naples; and the revolution, which in 1797 drew him from the retirement of his villa to become a member of the new government, with the title of "Aggiunto libero nel Comitato di publica Istruzione." While in this situation he wrote his "Saggio sugli Studi," and two political pamphlets, intended to quiet the unsettled minds of his fellow citizens, and which he is said to have regarded, on account of their useful tendency, with more pleasure

than any other of his works. About the same time he received the grant of a pension of three thousand franks on the bishoprick of Padua; but this he was deprived of by the return of the Austrians. When Buonaparte, however, again established the authority of France in the States of Venice, he was not only provided for by a new grant, but was raised to the dignity of a commander of the order of the iron crown. Napoleon's admiration of the poems of Ossian is well known; it was through Cesarotti's translation he had become acquainted with them, and his liberal conduct towards the poet was as creditable to himself as it was grateful to him who experienced it. Reflecting minds will always regard conquerors in a very different light to that in which they are viewed by the vulgar; but how much would even their feelings of dislike to the name be abridged, did the lives of conquerors exhibit many instances of liberality like those of Napoleon to Cesarotti and other men of literary eminence? It is a common observation with historians, that several of the princes whose names have come down to us emblazoned with the praise of virtue, owe much of their fame to the care they took to propitiate the monks, the only literary men of former days; and it is not unlikely that some ages

hence, Buonaparte may reap a similar reward for his uniform demonstration of respect to the learning and genius of his times, while not a few of his opponents will be consigned to the page, or as it is in those cases, the tomb, of history, without any of that lustre being thrown around their names, with which men of letters, fully as fond of their order as monks or nobles, love to decorate the friends of genius, in whatever nation or century they may have lived.

Cesarotti endeavoured to prove his gratitude for the Emperor's patronage by the poem on Providence; but both the public and the critics have agreed that it is wholly unworthy the name of the author, and that the occasional bursts of fancy and sentiment which it exhibits are not sufficient to counterbalance its violent exaggerations, its metaphysical refinements, and defective phraseology. The author, however, at the time of its publication, was in his seventy-seventh year, and survived its appearance only a twelvemonth. His death took place on the fourth of November 1808, and was occasioned by an inflammation of the viscera, which only left him time to prepare for his end by the immediate reception of the sacraments, and the expression of a wish to the Abbé Barbieri that he would superintend the publication of his works.

In person Cesarotti was low, but strongly formed; his eyes were of a light blue, bright and sparkling, but not large; and the general turn of his countenance, as far as it can be judged of from the descriptions given by his friends, was more expressive of activity than of depth of thought. Among strangers he is said to have been cold and reserved, but in the company of those he esteemed, his conversation was animated, and, on many occasions, brilliant. The kindness of his disposition made him the friend as well as the instructor of the young men under his charge, and his moral example was as valuable to them as his literary. Fond of the country, and of rural amusements, he was ever tranquil, virtuous, and contented, and few characters occur in the history of modern learning which give a more favourable idea of the retired man of letters, with no ambition but that of occupying a certain rank among those of his calling, and no care but that of diffusing knowledge by the best means in his power.

Cesarotti was not a man of resplendent genius, but his talents were of a high order; and the assiduous manner in which he cultivated them, enriched as well as strengthened and enlarged his understanding. His principal works are translations, and

his prose writings and epistolary correspondence may be justly regarded, perhaps as far better calculated to give us a high idea of his intellectual than his original powers. Mr. Hallam has observed, in his very admirable essay on the present state of Italian literature, that had he been born in a different age, taken more pains to expand his mind by travel, employed his knowledge of foreign literature more judiciously, and devoted himself to original composition, he might have taken a prominent place among the classical authors of his country.* I confess I am inclined to doubt whether there was that in his mind which raises men to prominent places among the geniuses of their country. The first effort of his youthful, and when he had the glow and ardour of youth on his side, was translation; and the last production of it, when matured by the studies of half a century, was an original epic, which nobody could read with pleasure.

* Illustrations of Childe Harold.

The Life of Ippolito Pindemonte.

Ippolito Pindemonte.

Ippolito Pindemonte, the descendant of a noble family of Verona, was born in that city on the thirteenth of November, 1753.* Endowed by nature with an excellent disposition and promising talents, his genius was fostered by every circumstance that could give it early maturity. His parents had not only sufficient wealth to procure him the most useful instruction, but were themselves distinguished for taste and ability. Their house thus became the resort of persons celebrated for every species of accomplishment; and, by his association from infancy with society of this description, the mind of the

* Memorie intorno alla Vita, &c. Antologia di Firenze, vol. 3; Mario Pieri.

young Ippolito was insensibly imbued with a love of literary pursuits, and those serene enjoyments, his fondness for which imparts so striking a characteristic to whatever he wrote.

To complete his studies, he was sent to the Collegio de' Nobili at Modena, then celebrated as one of the most fashionable and best conducted seminaries of education in Italy. There he had the advantage of being placed under the tuition of the learned Cassiani, a man of considerable ability, and who had gained celebrity by the publication of his sonnet on the Rape of Proserpine. The instructions of a master of this character could not fail of proving as agreeable as they were profitable to the youthful poet, and his academical exercises appear to have given promise of the eminence he was one day to obtain in the ranks of his literary countrymen.

The first of his efforts to amuse the public by his talents, was a translation of Racine's "Berenice." Complete success attended this experiment, and the people, especially the ladies, of Verona, were loud in their praises of his skill. Thus encouraged, he soon after produced several specimens of original composition, and became the friend and associate of many persons eminent at once for their learning and virtues. Among his

most intimate acquaintances were Giuseppe Torelli and Girolamo Pompei. Of both these friends he has written an account in his "Elogi di Letterati Italiani," and it seems probable, from the characters he has ascribed to them, that he derived from their example many of his literary tastes and habits. Torelli was profoundly versed in the mathematical learning of antiquity, and had made a translation of Archimedes, in the preface to which he strongly insisted on the value, almost unknown to the present generation, of the ancient scientific writers. Before, however, he commenced the study of mathematics, he had been an assiduous cultivator of general literature; had contracted a passion for poetry, and, according to Pindemonte's account, was led to the study of the exact sciences from a sense of perfection, or a poetical passion for pure truth; so that, observes he, "it would be difficult to decide whether Homer or Archimedes stood foremost in Torelli's estimation, his admiration having been established on the general principle, that poetry has its own particular truth, and geometry its own particular beauty." Clearness of style, extensive reading, and the graces of a pure morality, were the foundation on which this writer insisted, both by precept and example, that all endeavours after literary eminence should be established; and

Pindemonte imbibed his maxims in a manner which prove how effective they are in practice.

The other intimate friend of our poet, Girolamo Pompei, was equally distinguished with Torelli for his classical taste and erudition. In writing the eulogy of this his early associate, Pindemonte has recourse to the form of a dialogue, which he thus introduces. "I was in Venice," says he; "and, walking one day alone in the garden of Monsignor Patriarca, my mind was wholly occupied with the idea of writing the life or eulogy of Girolamo Pompei. What was my astonishment, when a form suddenly appeared in the distance, which, moving rapidly towards me, I at once recognised to be that of my friend himself. 'How! thou here! Do I not dream in thinking I embrace thee?' were the questions I put to the apparition. 'No! thou dost not dream,' replied the former; 'refrain thy curiosity altogether, and remember that very brief is the time that I may remain with thee!'—'Greatly do I rejoice to see thee again. And how opportunely art thou come! I was just preparing to write about thine own dear self, and was striving to remember the names of thy father and thy mother, which, notwithstanding our intimacy, have escaped my mind.' 'I was the son of Francesco and Bianca Brenzoni,' rejoined the apparition.'" After which, in reply

to the various questions put by Pindemonte, he detailed the principal events of his literary life, and gives a variety of instructive lessons on the exercise of the poetic art. The conclusion of the dialogue is not uninteresting.

" I congratulate myself," says Girolamo Pompei, " on account of the carelessness with which I left the Casa Marioni on that cold and stormy winter's night without a cloak. It was the cause of my contracting that fatal, but profitable disease, which carried me off in the fifty-seventh year of my age, whereby I avoided all the annoyances of a voyage in old age, and drew quietly into port.' Pindemonte replied to this, by lamenting that he had not been allowed the advantage of attending the sick-bed of his friend, in order that he might have learnt from him how to die, as he had learnt from him how to live. But scarcely had he given expression to this sentiment, when the apparition exclaimed " Who are they who have just entered the garden ?" " They are either unknown to me," was Pindemonte's reply, " or the distance prevents my recognising them :" having said which, he turned towards the place where his mysterious companion had stood, but he was gone, and his reappearance was looked for in vain.*

* Opere del Pindemonte, vol. ii. p. 217. &c.

With these men, for whom, as may be seen from the above, he entertained the liveliest affection, our author continued the successful prosecution of his studies, till his twenty-fourth year, when, seized with the desire of travelling, he set out on a tour through his own country, as preparatory to a more extensive journey. Having visited the principal cities of Italy, he embarked for Sicily, on leaving which he sailed for Malta, whence he departed on a tour in the East.

The advantages he reaped from travel could scarcely fail of being numerous and important. He commenced his journey with a mind richly cultivated, and he pursued it with an increasing appetite for knowledge. Several of his productions are attributable to the delight he found in travelling, especially his tragedy of Ulysses, published at Florence in 1778; the Gibilterra Salvata, his celebrated satire on tourists; and some of the most interesting passages in his other works. The profit, however, which his mind derived from the various scenes he visited, did not prevent his somewhat delicate constitution from feeling the effects of the excessive bodily fatigue to which he exposed himself in his tour. This accounts, it is supposed, for his being in the neighbourhood of Verona in the year

1785, nursing himself in the retirement of a rural villa, and writing as one who imagined he had but a short time longer to remain in the present world. According to his own account he was at that time entirely occupied in contemplation, physical and moral truth equally dividing his attention, but both holding such strong possession of his mind, that all his feelings took their mood and colour from his speculations. This he describes to be the almost inevitable consequence with every man who has the least grain of philosophy in his head, when he finds himself for the first time free and independent, and enjoying his liberty in the bosom of a green and tranquil retreat. His humour, he says, may a little incline to melancholy, and his rather weak state of health may, perhaps, give it a more sombre hue; but his melancholy will be sweet and unturbid, the presentiment of approaching dissolution having the effect of rendering still dearer to his mind those rural delights which he has so little time left to enjoy.*

It was while under the influence of these feelings, that Pindemonte commenced the portion of his works, for which a large class of readers will be dis-

* Le Prose e Poesie Campestri: Avvertimento alla Prima Edizione.

posed to give him the greatest praise. He was sensible and learned, and these qualifications enabled him to attempt successfully the imitation of that milder species of satire, of which Horace may be considered the originator. But it is in his campestral compositions, in the out-pourings of his mind when he lived in solitude, and had nature only for the object of his meditations, that he has left us the best means of judging of him as a poet, or of estimating to what extent he possessed the original inspiration of the muse. His other works remind us of books and of the world; these breathe only of the tender, thoughtful spirit of the author, and, for the most part, they inspire the deep and genuine pleasure of poetic thought.

Having recovered his health, contrary, as it would seem, to his expectations, he felt his passion for travelling return with undiminished force; and, in the year 1788, set out on a tour through the north of Europe. In the former part of this journey he visited Sweden, Germany, and Holland, and in the latter England and France. He remained in London five months, during which he published, in one of the journals, the outlines, from the Odyssey, of eighteen subjects for painting. His taste had long led him to admire English literature, for his

acquaintance with which he was probably indebted to his friend Giuseppe Torelli, an ardent admirer of our language; and, like his fellow-countryman Alfieri, his prejudices in favour of England were not in any way lessened by his residence in the country.

The villas, parks, and rural scenery in general, which met his eye here, called forth his warmest admiration; and our gardens and landscapes had fully as great a share in giving an English tone to his style as the study of our authors. Alfieri, too, speaks with delight of our tranquil, rural scenery; but his genius was of too turbulent a nature to receive the same advantage from its contemplation as did the gentle, musive Pindemonte. In the same manner, too, it may be observed, that both these poets became enamoured with the beauty of English women; but Alfieri's admiration gave birth to a stormy, licentious passion, which left nothing but disagreeable thoughts in his memory; while Pindemonte's led to a pure and tender attachment, the recollection of which appears in some of the sweetest and most musical of his stanzas.

In Paris he spent ten months of that year of trouble 1789; and, strongly excited by the scenes he witnessed, wrote his Ode on the Sepulchres of the Kings of France; a production more elevated in

style and sentiment than the generality of his works. Alfieri, as we have seen in the memoir of that author, was in Paris at the same period, and Pindemonte informed his friend Signor Pieri, that they passed a considerable portion of their time in each other's company, conversing every day on subjects connected with the literature of their own country, and with so much interest and attention, that he remarked, at no period of his life had he studied Italian authors with so much care as when he was surrounded with the light of French literature.

On his return from this tour, Pindemonte travelled leisurely through the different quarters of Italy, staying for a short period in every place which contained any person from whose conversation he could reap improvement. Thus it is mentioned, that he remained fifteen days in Milan for the sake of his two acquaintances Parini and the Countess Castiglioni, spending one week with the former and one with the latter.

Having satisfied his travelling propensities, he returned to Verona, desirous of spending the remainder of his years in the quiet employment of his talents, now matured and excited by the variety of scenes he had contemplated, and the thoughts with which they had filled his mind. But his coun-

try was unfortunately at this period agitated by every species of civil disorder, and there appeared little prospect of its escaping the still greater evils with which it was threatened. Prudence, therefore, suggested to him the expediency of seeking an asylum in some other country, where he might have less reason to fear interruptions to his repose; but with a laudable feeling of patriotism, he observed, that a man ought not to abandon his native land when it is in trouble and peril, and also, as a principle even of safe action, that it is better in a season of agitation to remain where we may be at the time, than to run the chance of falling into worse dangers by a precipitate flight.* Acting on these measures, he calmly awaited whatever it might be the fate of his country to endure; and, in the pleasant retirement of his villa, drew an antidote to fear and uneasiness, from study and the exercise of his pen. Much of his Campestral poetry and prose was produced at this period. He now also completed his tragedy of "Arminio," which, according to the judgment of Cesarotti, is one of the finest in the language, and commenced his poetical epistles, the translation of the Odyssey, and some of his prose compositions, among others the " Elogi" before referred to.

* Mario Pieri, art. Antologia di Firenze.

A brief period of tranquillity followed the agitation into which Italy had been thrown by the triumphant arms of the French Republic, and Pindemonte, with nothing to interrupt his meditations, devoted himself more closely than ever to his literary occupations. The subsequent troubles of the country obliged him to leave his favourite retreat among the green hills of Avesa, and he resided alternately at the mansions of the illustrious ladies Elisabetta Moscovi and Isabella Albrizzi. The unfortunate death of the former in 1807 induced him to take up his abode for a considerable part of the year in Venice, or the neighbouring towns of Piacenza or Pavia. But, wherever he resided, he was equally scrupulous in the employment of his time; and, from the year 1795 to his death, he appears, by the date of his productions, to have constantly had some new work before the public.

The health of this excellent and eminent man had long been in a delicate state, and had required the careful attention of kind friends, and the most retired and tranquil mode of life, to preserve it from a sudden and fatal decline. His ample fortune, the happy disposition of his mind, and the many affectionate companions which his amiable manners secured him wherever he went, afforded him all

these supports, and his constitution thus remained unbroken to a period when much stronger frames are found yielding to the attacks of age. Signor Pieri has recorded part of an interesting conversation which took place between him and Pindemonte, and in which the latter, speaking of his own lot, observed, "I ought to be contented with my state; I have always had, and still have, sufficient for my wants; I passed a brilliant youth (gioventù brillante); have travelled with great pleasure, and have experienced no great disasters in the affairs of life. Only one affliction has occurred to interrupt the tranquillity of my days, and this keeps me in a state of tribulation. I have seen almost all my friends fall off one after the other, and the greater part of them in the prime of their life!"

The conversation in which he thus expressed himself took place some years before his death; but nothing occurred, it is said, to render it inapplicable to his situation at the latest period of his career. With the exception of the uneasiness he occasionally experienced from the disturbed state of his country, he had but the one affliction above mentioned with which to combat; and to support himself under that, he had all the aids derivable from religion and philosophy, and the consolation of

having, though he had lost many friends, still many remaining. Few men, therefore, have passed a happier or more tranquil life than Ippolito Pindemonte, nor was his death less tranquil than the tenor of his life. The loss of his strength had for some time warned him of approaching dissolution, when Monti, the last of his early associates, was snatched away. His mind from that time ceased to be occupied with any other thoughts but those of death; and a slight cold having settled upon his lungs, he expired on the seventeenth of November, 1828. The affection in which he was held by his fellow-citizens of Verona appeared in the sorrow they exhibited at his funeral. The magistrates, the professors and students of the academy, and every class of the towns-people followed him to the grave, manifesting equal respect for his virtues and his talents.

There are certain minds which, though inferior to those of which the characteristics are great power and originality, nevertheless enjoy a wide command over the regions of thought. Pindemonte's intellectual character was of this class. He was meditative rather than imaginative. The images of his poetry, even the very sound of his verse, seem to have been the result of reflec-

reflection! They rarely startle, but they always please and soothe us; they lead us to think that he was seldom astonished, as men of a higher genius not unfrequently are, by the sudden influx of thoughts coming they know not whence, by the vision of things invisible to other mortals, or by flashes of supernatural light instantaneously revealing to the mind, without an effort of its own, wonders it had never dreamed of. But though the ideas of Pindemonte have not the new light or bloom upon them which seems to envelope the creations of more original minds, they have all the mild graces of matured beauty; if they may be termed reflections of thought, they are reflections of whatever is holiest and most beautiful in thought; if they afford not the delight which the mind feels in having new scenes or ideas presented to it, they give us all the pleasure to be derived from the contemplation of those which experience has proved to be most grateful for the mind to dwell on.

The character of Pindemonte appears to be rightly estimated in all its parts by the literary men of his own country.* "Nature endowed him," says an Italian Journalist, "with a mind capable of the sweetest emotions; art taught him to express

* Biblioteca Italiana, t. liii. p. 131.

them in verse: but art makes not great poets. None of those lofty productions emanated from his pen in which poets display their noblest faculty, that of Creation." "But," adds the same writer, "our age owes a debt of gratitude to Pindemonte for many vigils profitably consecrated to the promotion of useful learning, and for the excellent pattern he set of wisdom united to the purest virtue. Those who lived long with him, and saw his amiable manners, his mind free and tranquil, his true piety, and the virtuous conduct and devout conclusion of his life, will transmit with confidence to a future age the useful example of Pindemonte." *

Simple as are the details of his life, they fully bear out this testimony to his worth; and there are none of his works in which we may not discover some evidence of that clearness of thought, and that mingled correctness and warmth of feeling, which formed the foundation of both his moral and his literary character.

The brother of this excellent and distinguished man, the Marquis Giovanni Pindemonte, was celebrated during his lifetime as one of the first dramatists of the day; but his popularity was transient, and his productions have little claim to consideration, except in a history of the Italian drama.

The Life of Vincenzo Monti.

Vincenzo Monti.

The paternal mansion in which this celebrated writer first opened his eyes on the world, is situated on the left hand side of the road leading from Fusignano, a small town of Romagna, to Alfonsine. Fertility and repose are the characteristics of this retired district, and the few rustic cottages which shelter its humble population are embosomed in numerous groves of poplars. The house itself in which the poet was born, is a small but neat country seat, rising at the extremity of a beautiful plantation, and arresting the attention of the traveller as he passes by its simple porch, and the inscription which it bears from the Psalms, "Deliver me

from the oppression of man; so will I keep Thy precepts." In a little book of family records kept by the former possessor of this house, Fedele Monti, there is found written, under the date of February 19th, 1754, "A son was this day borne me, to whom I shall give the name of Vincenzo."*

Tranquil and happy were the days of the poet's infancy and youth, and according to the pleasing account given of this period of his life in the periodical quoted below, and the materials of which are said to have been derived from Monti's own lips, the dispositions which he earliest manifested were as mild and beneficent as the auspices under which he commenced his life. Fedele Monti and his wife appear to have been as perfect examples of piety and benevolence as the world can ever hope to see. Their income was not large, but there was not a poor person in the neighbourhood to whom their hand or their door was not open. Such was the pleasure which they took in this exercise of charity, that they regarded the affection shown them by the poor, as a special sign of the favour of God; and when they were obliged to remove to Magano for the convenience of masters for their children, the absence of those who had

* Biblioteca Italiana, numero cliv.

been accustomed to seek their alms struck them as an alarming misfortune. Forgetting that they were strangers in their new place of residence, they are said to have feared that they were no longer to be blessed as ministers of good to the suffering, and the wife, in her simple anxiety, could not refrain from running to the priest to mention her uneasiness.

The benevolence of these admirable people did not go unrewarded. Every one had a prayer and a blessing for them. When Fedele was on his death-bed, his neighbours gathered round him, and divided his last vestments into fragments, that each might possess some relic of their venerable friend. His name was for years after repeated with the deepest affection and reverence, and never perhaps was there a name which had a better right to be remembered and loved.

It was scarcely possible that the example of benevolence set them by their parents, accompanied as it was by every other amiable disposition, should fail of making a lively impression on the mind of our poet and his brothers and sisters. The former always spoke with fond enthusiasm of the happiness he enjoyed in his youth, and of the manner in which his parents inculcated the practice of the virtues for which they were themselves so remarkable. Of

all the rewards they were accustomed to bestow on any of their children for attention to study, that which was considered the greatest was a permission to dispense alms. To the credit of our poet he often obtained this honourable distinction, and he not unfrequently, it appears, allowed his good nature to overcome his judgment in the exercise of his stewardship. It was the custom to admit the poor who came for help at one door, and dismiss them by another; but occasionally the simplicity and kind looks of Vincenzo would tempt some one or two of them to return as if they had not already applied, and when this was the case, he would look another way, and drop the money into their hands without seeming to suspect the cheat.

His parents for some time were his only teachers; his next instructors were masters from Fusignano, and having received from them the necessary preparation, he was sent to school at Faenza. Like many other men of distinguished ability, he evinced no signs of talent in his early exercises. He was set in due time to write Latin verses; but, after many efforts, he was found to produce such wretched specimens of composition, that his masters despaired of his improvement, and they were at last reduced to the necessity of putting him into a lower class.

This was a proceeding which deeply afflicted him; but he secretly resolved to free himself from the disgrace, and the plan he adopted was admirably calculated to ensure his success. Considering that Virgil would be his best instructor in the art of making Latin verses, he, without saying a word to any one, began to commit the Æneid line by line to memory, and, in a comparatively short time, he had learnt the whole by heart. His power of constructing verses was, in the mean while, wonderfully increased; and when his masters again put him to the usual exercises of boys of his age, they were astonished to find that he could write them in the most perfectly classical phraseology.

It was not the intention, however, of his father to educate him for any of the learned professions; and, after having kept him at school sufficiently long to acquire the learning simply necessary for a private station, he called him home to take care of the farm. Vincenzo obeyed the summons with sorrow; he had become too fond of study to relish the idea of any other occupation, and a very brief period served to convince his father that he had not acquired at Faenza any improvement likely to make him a good farmer. Instead of attending to the work going on in the fields, or making the obser-

vations which were necessary to satisfy his father in the evening, he spent the best part of his time with his books, or in composing Latin verses, as he had done at school. Fedele, though an indulgent parent, was not pleased at this habitual negligence of his son in matters of business, and he began to remonstrate with him on the subject. The young poet at once admitted the impropriety of his conduct, and determined to amend. But it was in this, as in most instances, much easier to give than perform the promise; and Vincenzo found himself continually attracted to the pleasures he had forsworn.

More than ever conscious of his error in thus neglecting his occupations, he formed a resolution worthy of a much bolder mind than he ever gave signs of possessing. Calling his father into his chamber one day, he took all his books from the shelf on which they were ranged, placed them in proper order, and, setting fire to the precious pile, sacrificed the whole of his wealth to filial duty! His stoicism, however, forsook him when he saw nothing but the ashes of his books remaining, and he sank, overpowered with grief, into his father's arms. The good old man, pleased with the demonstration he had received of his son's affection, and

at the same time sympathizing with him in his sorrow, took twelve gold florins from his pocket, and placed them in a corner where Vincenzo was sure soon to find them. They were in fact quickly discovered, and the delighted youth flew without delay to a neighbouring village, where he laid out the money in re-purchasing his favourite authors.

Fedele Monti having by this time learned that it would be vain to make any farther attempt at suppressing the literary inclinations of his son, prudently resolved upon yielding to the necessity, and do all that lay in the power of prudence to obviate the evils which he feared might result from such a disposition. He knew that he could not supply Vincenzo with the means of independence, and he therefore proposed that he should commence the study of medicine, whereby he might provide for his necessities, and, at the same time, satisfy his passion for literature. Nothing could be fairer than this proposition, and the young poet was entered at Ferrara as a student of medicine.

But with whatever favourable auspices he commenced his new pursuit, it soon resolved itself into his former studies, and Virgil could hardly be of more use to him in the study of medicine than he had been to him in the fields, and among his father's

flocks. His advancement, however, in classical learning was conspicuous to the principal persons in the university, and he produced, not long after his arrival there, some Latin elegies, which were deemed worthy of being printed. Scarcely a fragment of the Latin compositions of Monti is in existence;* but it is a remarkable fact, that at this period of his life he considered that it would be utterly impossible for him to compose a stanza in his own language.

Fortunately for his fame he was prevented from retaining this idea. The poems of Varano and Minzoni having fallen into his hands, he was prompted to make an experiment on the possibility of his composing poetry in Italian as well as in Latin. The earliest of his productions in his native tongue of which he had himself any recollection, was the Prophecy of Jacob to his sons. Whatever were the imperfections of his first verses, he was not discouraged by the difficulties which he met with in their production from attempting more; and having read Dante with as much attention and avidity as he had formerly employed on Virgil, he at length produced the "Visione d' Ezechiello," a poem which, though ex-

* Opere, vol. viii. p. 8.

hibiting the usual marks of inexperience, was regarded as giving a sure presage of what the writer, then but eighteen, would one day effect. It was strongly imbued with the spirit of Dante, and was, consequently, as far opposed as possible to the corrupt style which had been introduced by Frugoni, and which had so generally prevailed, to the ruin of that pure and elevated taste which characterised the genuine and earlier productions of the Italian muse. The study of Dante had, no doubt, the chief influence in preserving the susceptible mind of Monti from the infection of the Frugonistes; but his classical reading had prepared him for judging rightly between the several writers who opened to him their schools, and he did not owe less to Virgil, perhaps, than did his master Dante himself.

While he was thus cultivating his poetical taste with a daily increasing ardour, the science of medicine was little attended to, and his father, who had removed to Ferrara with his family, seeing the indifferent progress he made in the study, allowed him to change for that of jurisprudence. His success in this branch of learning was as little remarkable as it had been in medicine; but he had fortunately attracted the regard of the Cardinal Borghese, who was then resident at Ferrara as

Legate; and the friendship of a person so wealthy and powerful contributed still farther to withdraw his attention from the sober pursuit of professional studies.

On the departure of the Cardinal from Ferrara, Monti, after encountering some resistance on the part of his father, accepted his gracious invitation to accompany him to Rome. The capital opened a new scene to him. He became acquainted with the most eminent of its citizens; and a few days after his arrival, was rewarded for a sonnet which he wrote in honour of Spinelli, to whom Rome was said to be indebted for its tranquillity, with a cameo of Vespasian set in brilliants, the gift of the prelate himself. On the discovery of the *Erme* of Pericles and Aspasia, he composed a Prosopopœia at the request of Ennio Quirino Visconti, whose profound classical knowledge rendered his acquaintance more valuable to our author than his rank and influence.*

Three years passed rapidly away in the society of men of this character, and at the end of that time our poet received a letter from his father desiring him to return to Ferrara. As he had no particular engagement to detain him at Rome,

* Notizie dal Conte Cassi.

he prepared for his departure; but on the eve of setting out, he was present at the fête given in honour of Duke Braschi, the Pope's nephew, on his marriage, and he recited on this occasion his poem "Sulla Bellezza dell' Universo," a production which so highly delighted the Duke, that he immediately appointed him his secretary, and thus retained him in Rome.

He was now in as advantageous a situation as he could desire for cultivating his favourite studies, and he produced in quick succession a variety of elegies and sonnets, the ode "Sul Globo Aerostatico," the "Amor Pellegrino," and the "Pellegrino Apostolico," the subject of which was the journey of Pius the Sixth to the Imperial Court. But a new era was produced in his poetical career on the arrival of Alfieri at Rome. Invited to hear that celebrated writer read his drama of Virginia at the house of Maria Pezzelli, his imagination took fire at the grand, concentrated enthusiasm of the poet's style in that production; the applauses which he heard bestowed upon it by the persons present, among whom were the excellent biographer the Abate Serassi, the Cavalier Puccini, il Cunich, and others, contributed still farther to excite in him a spirit of emulation, and he retired to his apartments with the determination of attempting a drama. It hap-

pened that he had been lately reading Pausanias, and his mind was still full of the story of Aristodemus. Confident in his powers, he immediately commenced a tragedy on this subject, and at its completion had the satisfaction of receiving from the Duke of Parma a medal of gold. This was a prize which that Prince had been accustomed to give to dramatic authors of genius, whose works were performed at his theatre, which at the time of Monti's appearance had been closed for two years, owing to the lack of dramas deserving approbation. The success which attended this, his first attempt, encouraged our poet to proceed, and he soon after produced his Manfredi, which contains several proofs of the powerful impression that had been made upon his mind by the study of Shakspeare. One of the characters, that of Zambrino, is the exact counterpart of Iago in Othello; and the influence of the English poet and of Alfieri together, gave an impulse to Monti's genius, which it could, probably, have received from no other source whatever. Rome resounded with his name at the representation of these dramas. The first performance of Aristodemo produced so lively an impression on the audience, that on leaving the theatre, people ran in crowds to the residence of the author to shout his

praise; and Goethe, who happened to be then in Rome, deeply impressed with a feeling of his powerful genius, immediately sought his friendship.*

It was while revelling in the happy sensations inspired by this rapid success, that he heard of the death of the celebrated Giovanni Pickler, an artist who would have done honour to the best eras of ancient sculpture, and whose decease involved his family in the deepest affliction and trouble; Monti, though personally unacquainted with them, felt the most lively sorrow at learning their distress; the genius of Pickler had long possessed his veneration, and with a romantic sympathy for his survivors, he a few days after his death proposed himself as the husband of his daughter Teresa, a young girl whom he had never yet had an opportunity of seeing. The proposal was accepted in the same spirit in which it had been made; Monti was as unknown to Pickler's daughter as she was to him; but his name had already won her regard, and the union which took place almost immediately, was consummated by a lasting affection.

The poems which Monti had hitherto produced were purely of a literary character, and it would

* Art. Biblioteca Ital.

have been well for his general reputation had he at present composed none of a different kind. But it was scarcely possible that this could be the case living when and where he did; the period was arrived when thought and speculation ceased to be luxuries, and became the common necessaries of social life. Literature, which had for ages been but the holiday music of men's minds, was henceforth to be the severe, however well measured, expression of all their daily passions and desires. It had hitherto been regarded as a good in itself, it was now chiefly to be viewed as a means of good: the whole order of the intellectual world was changed; the shadow was not merely no longer mistaken for the substance, it began to be doubted, and that rightly, whether good, truth, or happiness, could have a shadow.

Times like these were perilous for men of genius; they were compelled to take a part, as well by the circumstances in which they were placed, as by the activity of their minds. But neither honesty nor forethought is mentioned in the analysis which metaphysicians give of genius; a man of powerful imagination and eloquence is, in regard to his moral qualities, simply on a par with other men, or above or below them only as he cultivates or abuses

his moral feelings. It is not, therefore, altogether extraordinary to find a poet less careful in his conduct, or less honourable in choosing the cause he should espouse, than we might be led to expect would be the case, if we only kept in view the nobleness of his intellectual powers. The chief cause of Monti's errors, in the first instance, was his not fairly considering the path he might have to tread; for had he exercised his reason justly, it can hardly be supposed that he would have presented himself as the unsparing censor of principles, of which he was almost immediately after to appear as the laureate.

The production to which these remarks allude is his celebrated poem on the death of Ugo Basville, an individual whose name occupies a conspicuous place in the annals of the French Revolution. At the period that event took place, he was one of the editors of the "Mercure Nationale," or "Journal d'Etat et du Citoyen," and, in 1792, he was sent to Naples in the capacity of "Secretaire de Legation."* The commencement of the following year saw him at Rome, then the frequent scene of popular tumults, and on the fifteenth of January he was beset by the mob, who pelted him with stones,

* Biographie Universelle, art. Basville.

and drove him into a shop, whither he was pursued and there stabbed by some of his more ferocious assailants. He died a few hours after of the wounds he had received, and the National Convention immediately entered into an angry controversy with the court of Rome on the subject. In the course of the dispute it was asserted by the Papal party that Basville, before he breathed his last, had retracted his republican opinions, and expressed his repentance for the part he had taken in the revolution, an assertion to which it seems there is little reason to give credit. It was on this, however, that Monti founded his poem, which is written in the style of Dante, and, as a production of the imagination, merits all the praise it has received. Never was the harp of Italy struck with a bolder or more skilful hand than it was by Monti on this occasion. The diction, the imagery, the flow of the lines, appear to have been all inspired by that painful intensity of feeling which keeps the mind of the poet awake to those solemn visions at which intellects of a meaner order tremble, or can only endure as they are embodied forth in verse. Like his master, Dante, it was with the language and the feelings of one no longer of the earth that he had to do; and, like him, he had, for the period that his song lasted, the sight and the hearing of a spirit.

A poem of this description could not fail of producing considerable excitement. Men of letters regarded it with wonder, and the author was complimented with the title of "Dante Redivivo." Parini observed of him that he constantly appeared in danger of falling, such was the sudden sublimity of his flight, but that he never fell; and persons of profound learning did not disdain to enter upon a controversy to defend the propriety of a single expression of the poem, the "*freddo e caldo polo.*" In consequence of the reputation he thus acquired, Count di Vilzek, minister plenipotentiary in Lombardy, offered him the professorship of humanity, just vacant in the university of Pavia. But the offer was not at the time suited to Monti's views; Rome had attractions which a university could not possess; and, with the fame he now enjoyed, he had probably conceived hopes of a more profitable advancement.

His inclination, however, to remain at Rome was soon after overruled by his physicians, who advised him to try the air of Tuscany for his health, which was at present in a delicate state. In conformity with their advice he went to Florence, whither he was accompanied by Marechal Marmont, with whom he had lately become acquainted, through the introduction of his friend and patron Duke

Braschi. Apartments were provided for him in the house of Prince Kevenhüller, and his society was sought with flattering solicitude by all the most eminent persons of the city.

But the tide of public affairs was now at its height, and Monti, in the midst of his literary and social enjoyments, received intelligence that Ferrara had been nominated a province of the Cispadana Republic, just established under the auspices of France. With this intelligence he also received a letter from the Count Marescalchi, desiring his presence among his fellow-citizens, and exhorting him to take part with them in the glorious career on which they were entered.* The recollection of the "Cantica Basvilliana," of "*La pugna dell' Inferno*," and "*La temeraria Libertà di Francia*," vanished at the receipt of this invitation, and Monti became a republican.

It was not an idle or a silent assent that he accorded to the principles he thus embraced. At once giving vent to the ardent passion for liberty he had so suddenly conceived, he immediately published at Bologna, whither he had hastened, the first canto of the Prometheus, a poem as splendid in its poetical merits as it was inconsistent with the

* Notizie dal Conte Cassi.

opinions he had formerly advocated. But scarcely had he sent this production into the world, when the Cispadana Republic was absorbed, together with the Traspadana, in the famous Repubblica Cispadana. On this event taking place he was invited to Milan, the capital of the new state, and appointed to the office of Secretary General to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. But whatever might be the estimation in which the chief members of the government held him, he was regarded by the popular party with extreme suspicion and dislike. A law was proposed by which whoever had written in favour of the priesthood or the empire was declared ineligible for any public office. Monti was the special object of this decree; but the Directory saved him from the consequences to which it exposed him, and he was shortly after united with the advocate Oliva in the commissariat of the province of the Rubicon. But, whether from his real want of political talent, or from an uncertainty of feeling and disposition, the result of his late conduct, he obtained no credit in his new office, and, after a short and vain effort to bear up against the difficulties with which he had to contend, he retired from office in disgust, and accepted the reversion of the professorship then held by the aged Parini.

His official proceedings are allowed to have been all marked by the most virtuous integrity, and his chief fault in the eyes of his enemies was, that he sought to expose the peculations of some of those with whom he was joined in the management of affairs. So far as the exercise of his pen was concerned, he had laboured hard to merit the praises of the republic. The poems on Fanaticism and Superstition, on the congresses of Udine and Lyons, with some others written at the same period, attest either the ardour or the surpassing skill with which he could enter into the feelings of his republican masters. It would be an unjustifiable assumption to assert that in all this Monti played the part of a hypocrite, only doing what he thought was expedient for his own advantage. The origin of his political errors and delinquencies may be ascribed, in a considerable degree, to his negligence in not duly considering the nature of the principles he embraced; and thus it was, that when he again veered in his opinions, he observed, in respect to his zeal for the republic, "Sognai d' essere venuto alle nozze d'una bella e casta vergine, e mi sono svegliato fra le braccia d' una laida meretrice." "I imagined I had married a fair and chaste virgin; I awoke, and found myself in the arms of a base harlot." Other

expressions of his are also on record indicative of his regret at the part he had taken in the above events. "We were sitting one evening," says his friend, "in the plantations of the Porta Orientale, and our discourse happening to turn upon those times of melancholy memory, some person present observed, with the view of comforting him, that dark as was the period, he had nevertheless gathered in it a most lovely laurel. But Monti shook his head, and held it down as a man who repented and was angry with himself, and then, in an undertone of voice, repeated those lines from his Aristodemo:

——————— i nostri allori,
Di tanto sangue cittadin bagnati,
Son di peso alla fronte e di vergogna.

——————— These our laurels,
Bathed in the blood of slaughtered citizens,
Are but a load and shame upon our brow.*

No situation could be much more deplorable than was Monti's on the French being driven from Italy. He was not of them, but he had no means of avoiding sharing in their discomfiture. The part he had taken in blazoning their cause was not sufficient to

* Art. Bibliot. Ital.

ensure him their respect, but it was more than sufficient to make him feel that the Austrians would not spare him. He was among the earliest, therefore, who passed the Alps, and in his flight he is said to have lost most of the little property he carried with him.* His first resting-place was at Chamberry, where he remained several months, and then proceeded with Count Marescalchi to Paris.†

The account which has been given of his condition in the French capital would scarcely be credible, had it not come, in the first instance, from his own mouth. When he arrived there, his money was almost exhausted, and as he had no inclination to let his condition be known to persons from whom he had little chance of receiving sympathy, he sought an obscure lodging, in which he hid both his fame and his poverty, with a martyr-like resolution, from the world. The trifling sum he had with him when he arrived, was soon no longer sufficient to keep him from the approaches of starvation, and he was at last reduced to the necessity of walking for miles into the country to gather a meal from the fields or the hedge-rows. Day after day he thus existed, collecting his food in long and weary rambles, and indulging himself in the most melancholy

* Art. Bibliot. Ital. † Notizie dal Conte Cassi.

reflections as he lay down to eat his miserable repast in the first nook that pleased his fancy. These rambles, however, and the want of nourishment, soon exhausted his strength, and he then found it necessary to carry home some part of the fruit he collected one day, to save himself from the fatigue of going out the next. Every hour saw him grow more feeble, and he was at length obliged to betake himself to his bed, with no other idea than that of lying there till he died. But at this juncture his wife arrived from Italy, where she had remained to save their affairs from the total disorder which threatened them on his departure. She brought with her some money, and the pleasing intelligence that she had succeeded in putting their concerns in tolerable security. Poor Monti lay stretched on his wretched pallet when she entered his apartment, and seemed in the last stage of his existence; but the tidings she brought, and the cheerful assiduity with which she instantly set about restoring his strength, had the effect of speedily dissipating his melancholy, and he was soon so far recovered in health and spirits, as to be able to leave his obscure lodging, and mix in the society to which his name and reputation would at any time have been a sufficient introduction.

The distress which he had suffered had not clogged his genius. He produced, while in Paris, the poem entitled "Mascheroniana," to commemorate the death of his friend Lorenzo Mascheroni, a mathematician of eminence, and the tragedy of Cajo Gracco. In both these works he gave vent to sentiments which had little accordance with those of a French republican minister, and his friends are said to have feared that they would involve him in fresh troubles. No ill consequence, however, resulted from the freedom with which he again declaimed against anarchy, and Napoleon's victory at Marengo restored him, with new hopes, to his country. The universities were no sooner put in order, than he was nominated by the conqueror to a professorship at Pavia, where his eloquent prælections procured for him popularity as an orator scarcely less than that which he enjoyed as a poet.

After having passed three years in this situation, he was summoned to the capital, and installed in the office of assessor to the minister of the interior in all matters relating to literature and the fine arts. By virtue of this station, he became in fact the poet of the court; and few laureats, it must be confessed, have performed their duties with more apparent zeal than did Monti when singing the tri-

umphs of France and her Emperor. So well satisfied, indeed, was Napoleon with his loyalty, that he bestowed on him the still farther dignity of historiographer of the kingdom of Italy; an office to which a stipend but no duties were appended. By this appointment, he was placed in such easy circumstances, that he was enabled to devote himself to studies which required a mind free from all meaner cares to accomplish with success. He had some time before commenced a translation of the Iliad, and had rendered into Italian the 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 18th Books; but the untoward course which his fortunes had taken soon after the commencement of the design, put a period for the time to its farther progress. Nothing stood at present in the way of its completion, and the public had the satisfaction of receiving, as the fruit of the Emperor's judicious bounty, one of the most brilliant translations of Homer that had been ever executed. The undertaking owed its origin to a conversation which Monti had with Saverio Mattei, at the table of Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo.* According to Mattei, it was impossible for Homer to be translated faithfully, without presenting many low and prosaic passages. This, as has been mentioned

* Notizie dal Conte Cassi.

in the life of that author, was Cesarotti's opinion; but Monti warmly opposed the dogma of these learned men, translated the books above mentioned in support of his argument, and having so far accomplished his task, obtained the universal suffrages of the public in his favour. That which renders his triumph, and the indisputable excellency of his version the more extraordinary, is the fact, that he was unacquainted with the language of the original, and, like Pope, translated by means of Latin versions, and the aids he was able to derive from the voluminous writings of commentators. He had already manifested his skill as a translator by an excellent version of Persius, and his talents as a critic by his letters "Sul Cavallo alato d'Arsinoe;" but his Iliad placed his reputation on a broader basis than it could have been by any other work of a similar kind; it was said to have given a ring to Italy, by which its literature was wedded to the literature of Greece; and it is certainly true that it united in favour of our author the praises of the learned and the gratitude of the public.

But while he was thus employed, the political horizon of Italy again prognosticated change, and the portentous signs were scarcely seen, before the troops of Austria planted their standards around

Milan. Monti did not this time become an exile; his facile muse, having learnt to praise one Emperor, deemed it no hard service to praise another, and the professor and historiographer of Napoleon hailed the arrival of the Archduke to receive the oaths of the Milanese, with a poem entitled "Il Mistico Omaggio;" with another, which bore the title of the "Ritorno d'Astrea," and with a third, called an "Invito a Pallade." He is said to have written these poems out of gratitude to the Emperor of Austria, for continuing him his pensions; but it is impossible to venerate Monti's genius aright, and not feel mingled contempt and sorrow for the base sacrifice of all honesty and truth, of which, in political matters, he was so often guilty.

It is not improbable but that a secret feeling of dissatisfaction with himself on this account, might be the cause of his turning his attention about this time from poetry to grammar and criticism. If he had any sentiment of honour or freedom in his bosom, he must, in fact, have inwardly shrunk from the idea of having to write fresh strains of adulation to gratify masters whom another change might oblige him to revile. However this may be, he undertook a revision of the "Vocabolario della Crusca." Associated with him in this work was his

daughter's husband, Giulio Perticari, a young man of the highest ability, and whose "Difesa di Dante," &c. have secured him, short as was his career, a permanent station among the most excellent scholars of his country.

Thus assisted in his labours, he proceeded happily with his several undertakings, till a severe malady in one of his eyes compelled him to desist for a time from personal exertions. While suffering from this attack, he wrote the beautiful little poems to which he gave the general title of "Sollievo nella Malinconia;" and which, as well as whatever else he composed at this time, he dictated to his son-in-law. But, to his deep affliction, he was suddenly deprived of this his constant and affectionate companion, and he could only console himself under the loss by reflecting that his age promised him a speedy re-union with his friend. Tranquillizing his mind with thoughts of this description, he proceeded with the works he had so auspiciously begun; and the "Proposta," for correcting and enlarging the vocabulary, and a series of learned notes to the "Convito di Dante," proclaim in the most powerful manner both his erudition and his taste.

Having by these productions satisfied his zeal for the purity of his native language, and the reputation

of his great master in verse, he again turned to the muses, wrote the poem, "Idyllio alle nozze di Cadmo," and was meditating others, when shortly after retiring to his study, on the night of the 9th of April 1826, he received a stroke of paralysis which left little hope of his life. Milan, it is said, when his dangerous state was made known, the next morning, presented a scene of general lamentation, and crowds ran to his house to inquire and express their grief.

The shock he had received did not prove fatal. Animation and reason returned, and his friends had the satisfaction of seeing him recover sufficient strength to join with them again in the social circle. But the power of mental exertion was gone, and the only motive that could now quicken his mind into action was derived from the tender affections with which he looked back upon the long course he had enjoyed of domestic felicity. The last ray of the light which had shone so brilliantly during his protracted career, beamed cheerfully but momentarily forth on the birth-day of his beloved wife; and the music of the dying swan was, as he had always desired it should be, expressive only of mild and beneficent emotions.

Monti lingered for two years after his first attack

of paralysis. In the May of 1828, he was seized with another, after which he lay in a state of complete exhaustion till the 9th of October, when it was evident that death was near at hand. The sacrament was then given him, and his eyes appeared closed for ever. When his wife, however, led their only child, Costanza, to the bed-side, he opened them once more, and smiled. After this he exhibited no sign of life but a low and inaudible breathing, and about a quarter past seven on the morning of the 13th he expired. His funeral took place two days after, and on the birthday of his wife, which he had been accustomed to celebrate with so much affection and delight. The procession was attended by immense crowds of persons, all exhibiting, it is said, the strongest marks of love and admiration for the departed.

The fame of Monti places him in literary history on a par with the greatest poets of his country. All he wanted to make him really their equal, was that boldness and comprehension of mind, which enabled them to form and pursue plans that it took a life to execute, but which could not be too noble or too carefully elaborated for works that were to endure through ages. In his numerous productions are to be found every species of thought necessary

to the sublimest intellectual structure; but he wrought like a magician, who could heap up treasures at his will, and fashion the gold and the precious stones for his splendid palace, but could not bid it rise bright and entire at his word. In this respect he is far below the great classics of his country, and bears the marks of having lived in an age when poetry could with difficulty sustain any lofty or lengthened flight. It must be confessed, also, that some of his finest passages, while they remind us of Dante, affect us but as the echo of ancient grandeur, as the imitations, however, not of an individual writer, but of the spirit of a happier and nobler age.

In his person Monti was tall and well-formed; his eyes were bright, but soft in their expression; his brows thick and arched, and the whole air of his countenance, as well as his walk and gesture, indicative of thoughtfulness and occasional melancholy. Of his general character, the great and conspicuous blemish has been already more than once mentioned. It would be difficult to find an excuse for it, for while he degraded himself to secure the wages of his prostituted muse, he had the example before him of hundreds of his countrymen who forsook their homes and became wanderers

over the earth rather than even live under, much less praise, the tyrannous government of Austria. With this unfortunate exception, the qualities of his character were such as to secure universal regard. He was warm and faithful in his friendships, affectionate in all his domestic relations, forgiving and free from envy, and ever ready to impart to others a share of the good he himself enjoyed. When on the point of starvation in Paris, he is said to have divided the last two zecchins he possessed with a poor creature whom he met begging in the streets; and when he was earnestly pressed to translate the Odyssey as well as the Iliad, he replied that he wished above all things to do so, but that he would not, lest he might thereby vex the good Pindemonte.

The Life of Ugo Foscolo.

Ugo Foscolo.

THE name of Ugo Foscolo is as familiar to many English ears as those which belong to the literary biography of our own country. He had, it is true, already reached the highest degree of reputation he was destined to attain when he came to England, and it cannot be said that his residence here contributed to the stronger developement of his powers. Though familiar with our customs and literature for years, there is nothing in his works which breathe an English air; while Alfieri and Pindemonte, only casual visitors to this country, caught much of its ruling literary spirit, and knew how to transfuse it into their writings. But among the closest inti-

macies he formed throughout life, were some of those which he contracted in England; and if it was in his own country that he exhibited, in the worthiest manner, the virtues of magnanimity and patriotism, it was in this that he both received the justest measure of praise for his merits, and suffered most deeply for the errors which tarnished his character and conduct.

This extraordinary man was born in the Island or rather in the port of Zante, in the year 1775 or 1776, and it was always with pleasure that he alluded to his Grecian nativity.* His mother was a Greek, but his father was a Venetian surgeon, employed at the time of his birth in one of the vessels of war belonging to the republic. Attempts have been made to trace his name to a noble origin, and with some success; but Foscolo himself

* The materials of this Memoir are derived from a variety of sources. A life of Foscolo has been just published at Lugano, by Signore Fecchio, who was his intimate acquaintance; notices of his life have also appeared in several periodicals, written by persons whom I have the pleasure of knowing, and who lived with the Poet on terms of the closest intimacy. Respecting most, however, of the facts recorded in the following pages I have consulted these gentlemen myself, and to them and others whose names will be found mentioned in the Memoir, I have to express my cordial thanks for their communicating to me many interesting circumstances hitherto unnoticed.

was always more desirous of resting his claims to respect on his own merits, than on the doubtful foundation of a supposed nobility.

The death of his father occurring in his infancy, he was early left to the care of his mother, who shortly after removed to Venice. But he had remained at Zante sufficient time to imbibe a lively sense of the exquisite beauty of its climate and scenery, and a fondness for the harmony of the Grecian language, which he retained to the latest period of his life. Having completed the elementary branches of education, he had the good fortune to be placed under Cesarotti at Padua, from whose lectures and example he derived the strongest excitement to literary ambition. Greek, notwithstanding the free opinions of the professor on classical subjects, continued to occupy the chief place in his affections; and his active and fervid mind was contented to wear the chains which the less energetic genius of his master had thrown off.

Uncertain as to the choice of a profession, he for some time entertained an idea, it is said, of entering the church; but from this intention he was drawn by an increasing passion for the muses; and in 1797 he commenced his career as a poet, by the production of the tragedy of Tieste. The merit of this work, simply considered as a dramatic poem,

is of a very doubtful nature; it displays the working of a strong intellect, confined, and in some degree chilled, by classical prejudices, and inflamed on the other hand both by personal and political passion. A crowded audience was present at its first representation, which took place in the theatre of Saint Angelo, on the 4th of January 1797, and the boldness of the language, the political allusions, and the youth of the author, had the effect of rousing all the enthusiasm of the citizens in his favour. At the conclusion of the performance, he had to obey their summons, and appear on the stage himself, to receive their congratulations; and for nine successive evenings the theatre rang with their renewed and increasing plaudits.

Foscolo's literary life was now fairly begun, and the first step he set in the world gave him warning of the troubles which he would have to encounter in the course of his independent career. The political sentiments which appeared in his tragedy attracted the attention of the government, and, at the earnest persuasion of his mother, he consented to withdraw himself for a while from public observation. From an anecdote related of his conduct at this juncture, the danger, it would appear, which he had incurred was not of a trifling nature. Suspected of being among the leaders of a conspi-

racy against the state, he was summoned before the tribunal of the Inquisition. He escaped; but while the peril was impending over him, his mother is said to have exclaimed, with a heroism which struggled hard against her maternal tenderness, "Remember that you must perish rather than betray your companions."

The tyrannical character of the Austrian government left no hope of safety for the youthful poet, and he retreated first to the Euganean hills, and then to Florence. What he felt on this occasion is strongly delineated in his letters of Jacopo Ortis; and the deeply affectionate sentiments he expresses for his mother, and of indignation at the infamous conduct pursued towards his country, afford a strong proof of the natural goodness and nobility of his nature. "The sacrifice of our country," he exclaims, "is consummated; all is lost; and our life, if it be spared, will only be left us to weep over our misfortunes and our infamy. My name is in the proscription, I know it; but would you have me commit myself to those who have betrayed me, to save myself from those who oppress me? Console my mother. Overcome by her tears, I have obeyed her, and left Venice to avoid the first and fiercest persecution. But ought I to abandon this my wonted retreat, where, without losing sight of my

miserable country, I may yet hope for some days of peace? You make me tremble, Lorenzo. Alas! alas! shall we, Italians ourselves, imbue our hands in the blood of Italians? For me, let come what may, I despair both for myself and my country, and I tranquilly await imprisonment and death. My corpse at least will not fall into the arms of strangers. My name will be repeated with affection by the few good men, companions of our miseries, and my bones will rest on the land of my fathers."*

Florence, with all its attractions, could not detain Foscolo for more than a few weeks. Fond of letters, he was still fonder of action; and, with a mind strongly excited by the scenes passing around him, and not uninfluenced, perhaps, by a feeling of pride at finding himself so early an object of political persecution, he naturally longed for farther opportunities of displaying his talents and his courage. Tuscany, therefore, in vain offered him safety and ample opportunities of study. Bidding adieu to repose, he hastened to Milan, the capital of the lately founded Cisalpine republic, and at once found himself in the centre of the political vortex.

The picture drawn of Milan at this period by those who were actors in the scene, at once explains the reasons of Foscolo's preferring that city to

* Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis. Let. 1.

Florence. All Italy resounded at the time with the splendid fame of General Buonaparte; but Milan was filled with the men who had gained his victories; his success had opened its theatres, animated its remotest quarters with new life, and attracted to its gates the most eminent public characters from all parts of the country. Republicanism, it is acknowledged, and was even then felt by many, was but a theory and a shadow there; but while the dream lasted, it had all the brilliancy which keeps popular hope constantly on the wing, and inspires men of genius, whether poets or philosophers, with the strongest incitements to the exertion of their talents. Foscolo, though he is said to have regarded much of what was passing around him with the eye of a cynic rather than of an enthusiast,* felt its full influence on his mind. He had been suddenly converted into a politician; but he revelled with evident satisfaction in the gay and tumultuous festivity which the emancipated Milanese enjoyed. At one time employed in declaiming among his companions on the general topics of public interest, and at another in solitary study, his mind every day acquired new strength; he became an orator as well as a poet; and, mingling in the early part of the day with the busiest, and

* Vita da Pecchio, p. 58.

at night with the idlest spirits, his character was rapidly developed in all its elements.

It was while his feelings were thus kept in perpetual agitation, that he met with a young Roman lady, whose beauty inspired him with a passion, which, for the time, diverted his thoughts from every other subject. She was, however, already engaged to another, and, with a stern adherence to principles scarcely to be looked for in one of Foscolo's violent disposition, he resolved upon never communicating his love to the object who had inspired it. But though he probably kept religiously to this resolution, so far as a direct intercourse with the lady was concerned, he was too much under the influence of his poetic star to be able to smother the passion silently in his bosom. The consolation to be derived from the sympathy of minds similarly constituted, and suffering from similar causes, is a boon which poets began to seek as soon as poetry ceased to be employed solely in the service of the Divinity, or that the imagination of men became learned enough in the mysteries of humanity to make its appeals to the human spirit, instead of nature, for sympathy. Hence it is that poetry, when not cultivated in its highest branches, naturally fosters egotism, which disgusts, or inspires sympathy, and consequently

pleasure, according to the weak or noble character of him who makes us acquainted with the workings of his heart.

Foscolo, therefore, while he showed himself superior in virtuous self-denial to more than one of his most celebrated countrymen, could not refrain from indulging in the luxury of describing his passion, and all the emotions to which it gave rise in his mind. The result was a work entitled "Lettere di due Amanti," or the letters of two lovers, a production, the literary merit of which he soon after considered to be so little, that he used his utmost endeavours to withdraw it from the notice of the public. It was, however, the foundation of the work for which it is generally considered he will be finally indebted for the rank he may hold in the estimation of posterity. The Letters of Jacopo Ortis were the result of reflection; those of the two lovers were the genuine result of passion, and this is only one of many instances which leads to the conclusion, that it is not when the mind is actually under the excitement of passion, but when it has begun to reflect on its passion, that it is in the best state for communicating its emotions through an artificial channel. When the individual is himself present to tell his tale of suffering or of wrong, the moment in which he can most power-

fully appeal to our sympathies is that in which his own feelings are most strongly excited; but when he has to employ the artificial medium of a book to make us feel his passion, the case is altogether different. The simple expression of feeling by natural signs requires no reflection, but the use of artificial means demands an acquaintance with the right manner of applying them, which nature rarely teaches, and which she never does when wholly occupied with resenting, or endeavouring to support some present injury.

But the mind of our author was, soon after the publication of the "Letters," diverted from the farther indulgence of his melancholy by a summons to join the Lombard Legion, then on the point of being formed, and which was to compose part of the Italian army intended to resist the threatened invasion of Austria and Russia. It was a new career for Ugo Foscolo, and he entered upon it with the usual ardour of his character. In the retreat of the Cisalpine Government to Genoa, where it was hoped the remnant of the Republic might be preserved, he accompanied it to that city, and found there full occupation for all the energies of his active mind. A siege was commenced, and carried on by the invading army,

which reduced the people to the extreme of misery. For nine months they suffered every species of hardship and privation; and during that time the garrison was engaged in daily skirmishes with the enemy, while the nights were spent by the principal officers and citizens in debating on the miserable condition of the Republic. In these assemblies, Foscolo distinguished himself by the vigour of his oratory; and he not unfrequently employed his talents in addressing the populace during the day, and in those parts of the town which were remembered as the spots in which Austrian despotism had exercised its oppressive cruelties. Not contented with these efforts in the cause of liberty, he no sooner heard of Buonaparte's return from Egypt than he wrote to him in a style of eloquence equally admirable both for the freedom of the sentiments, and the succinct force of the expressions, with which he warned him of the danger of ambition to one who had risen to glory as the champion of liberty, and besought him to seek no higher dignity than that which he had already obtained.

But amid all these occupations, he still found time for poetry, and some of his most admired verses are attributed to this period. The Ode to Luigia Pallavicini was occasioned by an accident

which that lady, a young and beautiful Genoese, and celebrated for her fearlessness in riding, met with, while taking the air on a spirited horse by the sea shore. There is little to praise in this composition; but the beauty of the verse, and the gay manner in which the author plays with his mythological images, save it from being read with the indifference which would otherwise attend its utter want of originality in the thoughts.

Genoa continued to hold out till the 4th of June 1800, when, reduced to the last extremity by disease and famine, it was obliged to surrender. According to the terms of the capitulation, the principal Members of the Republic were to be allowed a passage to France in English ships; and in conformity with this stipulation, Foscolo and his companions retreated to the Antibes as the point least distant from their own country. Their exile, however, was brief; on the return of Buonaparte to Italy the invaders fled precipitately before his victorious troops, and Foscolo again found himself settled at Milan amid his old companions, and in the undisturbed enjoyment of his literary pleasures. Delighted with the repose he thus possessed, and the value of which was considerably heightened by the recollection of the scenes he had lately wit-

nessed, he determined to convert the substance of the "Lettere di due Amanti," into the romance already alluded to of Jacopo Ortis. The perusal of Goethe's celebrated tale of Charlotte and Werter, was the immediate cause which induced him to think of putting his ideas into the form of a romance, a species of composition at that period little known in Italy, and the spirit of which being essentially sombre seems to shun the brilliant skies and sparkling scenes of the South.

The romance of poetry, and it was in that form only that Italy had been made acquainted with romance, has little in common with the modern romance of Germany or England. The favourite argument which the writers of prose romance use to exalt that branch of literature, is founded on an improper view of the case. They observe that many of the persons who would refuse to read one of their works on the score of its being a romance, read with delight a romance in poetry. But they are, in fact, two essentially different species of writing, and derive their attractions from opposite sources. If the most celebrated productions in each class be compared, it will be found that the romance of poetry, with some few conspicuous exceptions, appeals chiefly to the imagination, and that if it

affect the heart, it only reaches it through the medium of the fancy; while the genuine prose romance places its whole strength in sentiment, cautiously admitting the interference of the imagination, and like the genius of tragedy, delighting in mystery, in busying the mind with strange doubtings, and occupying the whole of our moral nature with feelings, the full enjoyment of which is incompatible with the pleasurable excitements of fancy.

Certain, however, it is, that Foscolo was regarded by his countrymen as introducing among them a new species of composition, when he produced the "Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis;" but equally certain it is, that he did not produce this work till he had thoroughly imbued his mind with the style and sentiments of one which was foreign to his country. Whatever particular instances of original thought therefore his work possesses, and they are many, it would be absurd to allow it the praise of originality in respect to its particular character as a romance. The tone of feeling throughout is that of Charlotte and Werter, so far as German feelings can be represented or participated in by a person nurtured under different circumstances, and in every other respect but one, under the influence of different

motives to action. It is true that Foscolo has made his hero a politician, and filled his mouth with observations on the passing events of the age; but this in no way affects the groundwork of the tale; and the triumph of the original idea on which the romance is founded, over the strongest counterbalancing sentiments, only proves the more strikingly how powerful a hold the spell of the German writer had upon the heart of the Italian.

But it may be justly questioned after all, whether the intrinsic merit of Jacopo Ortis ought to be considered as involved in this question. If we form our opinion of the work simply from itself, it cannot fail of eliciting praise; and that of a kind rarely obtained by productions of the sort. An inspiring and noble elevation of sentiment on all subjects connected with the liberty of mankind appears in every page; the descriptions of natural scenery with which it is interspersed are exquisitely given, and are, in fact, the sweetest poetry that the author wrote, while the best judges on the subject allow, that the style affords one of the best models of modern Italian eloquence that exist. But to modify the merit which it hence possesses, its romantic sentimentality is too generally of the very worst species; the observations which the author makes when

speaking under the influence of this enervating absurdity are wholly unworthy of his understanding ; and the reader who has delightedly drunk in the bold and happy eloquence of the better portions of the work, sickens at the weak and puling affectations of the author's amatory complaints. It is well known that Foscolo intended to describe his own feelings and situation under the character of Ortis. In this respect the tale has an additional interest ; but the exaggerations of which he is guilty make us too often lose sight of the man in the hero, and the excellent observation which Cesarotti once made when lamenting his condition, might with some modification be applied to Foscolo in this novel ; " I am always," said the translator of Ossian, " either a philosopher, a poet, or a rhetorician ; I am never simply myself."

The publication of Jacopo Ortis produced a considerable sensation. It had all the charms of novelty to recommend it, and the sentiments it expressed could scarcely fail of making a powerful impression on the minds of its readers. The patriot gladly sympathised with the author, and flattered himself that he saw his own image in the eloquent and persecuted Jacopo, while the fair sex hung enraptured with dangerous pleasure over its fascinating pictures of devoted, sorrowing affection.

Foscolo now enjoyed all the flattering attentions of a popular author, and was, it appears, soon involved in a new affair of the heart. The object of this passion is said to have been a daughter of the identical Marchioness whom Sterne encountered at Milan. From some cause or other, however, the lady proved unfaithful, and after regarding him with complacency till she had made sure of his affection, dismissed him from her thoughts. Signor Pecchio says that he was some years after walking with Foscolo, when the lady alluded to passed them in her carriage, and that he had the curiosity to ask him if he knew whether she who had a countenance so full of expression, had ever herself felt the passion with which she knew so well how to inspire others. The answer was in keeping with the usual tone of Foscolo's language, when somewhat irritated; "I believe not," he said, "She has a heart made of brains!"

Foscolo's character was, in one respect, happily constituted. His passions were not more violent than his mind was active; and whenever the one met with a sudden check, he seems to have found a speedy relief by giving the reins to the other. In 1802 we find him again appearing in the character of a politician, and addressing Buonaparte in an oration intended to have been delivered before

the Congress, assembled at Lyons. It has been supposed that he was one of the deputies present at that assembly; but Signor Pecchio observes, that he thinks he remembers having seen him during the whole period of its sitting, at Milan; and that he was employed by the three persons who then formed the provisional government, to thank Buonaparte in the name of the Cisalpine Republic. The oration exhibits, in a striking manner, most of the peculiarities of the author's style, and while it is remarkable for the fearlessness, it is also not unfrequently disfigured by the bombastic character of the expressions. The commencement will be sufficient to convince the reader of the truth of this observation. "Since I have been directed," he says, "by those who are at the head of affairs in the Cisalpine provinces, to praise thee in the name of the people, and to erect for thee, as well as the voice of a young and inexperienced, but free writer, may be able, a monument of gratitude which shall present to posterity *Buonaparte*, the institutor of the Cisalpine Republic,—I, as far as my ability will allow, and distrustful as I am of these licentious and tyrannical times, but full of my lofty theme, and of the passion for glory (furore di gloria), a passion which all sublime minds have in common with thine,

and inflamed with love of my country, and with the resolution to sacrifice myself to truth, I have willingly undertaken the task, hoping to obtain the object I have in view, at least in part, though not by the propriety of my style, nor by the magnificence of my encomiums, but by freely speaking to the greatest of mortals ! ! To praise thee, I shall speak but the truth ; and to obtain the faith of nations, I shall speak as a man who neither fears nor hopes any thing from thy power, but who turns to thee with the confidence of honesty and virtue, even as the divine souls of Cato and other renowned men turned themselves towards the supreme mind of Jove !"

Such is the long-drawn and stilted style in which this celebrated oration commences, and certainly to English ears nothing can sound more harshly, or seem less opposed to every principle of good taste. The only excuse to be made for the writer is, that he composed it at a period when men, much less learned than himself, were foolishly in love with the tales of Roman glory, and few or none felt that genuine, moral passion for liberty, which inspires the mind with too much dignity to be amused with names and gilded pictures of the past, and keeps it steadily and earnestly bent on the attainment of

the blessing itself, because it is in itself, and without the help of any associations whatever, a good and glorious object of pursuit. Foscolo had far too much sense to be deceived, like most of his countrymen, by the quixotry of republicanism ; but he too often spoke like a pedant, instead of in the plain, manly tone of earnest patriotism ; and the effect which his classicisms have on the mind is to make it doubtful whether to sympathise or not with his expression of more natural sentiments.

It would, however, have been happy for him had he allowed his scholarship to exercise as strong an influence over his conduct as it did on his taste. He seems to have been at this period the sport of his passions, and to have yielded unresistingly to every suggestion of folly. His days were spent in study, but his nights were divided between the theatre and the gaming-house. His fondness for play was characterized by the impetuosity which in so many other respects prevented his attending to the common suggestions of prudence. But this was not all. He not only sacrificed his reason at the faro-table, but allowed himself to be deceived in the most absurd manner by every turn of the chances in his favour. As he played high, he sometimes won a considerable sum ; and when this was the

case, he would immediately order the most fashionable clothes, purchase horses, and hire apartments of the most expensive kind. The money he had gained was of course soon expended, and sometimes lost before he could expend it; he would then bury himself in complete solitude, neither leaving his chamber, nor ceasing from study for days together.

From this dissipated and irregular mode of life he was at length called, by a summons to join that portion of the Italian Army, which Napoleon ordered to the rendezvous of his troops at Boulogne, and the neighbourhood. Foscolo was attached, with the rank of Captain, to the staff of General Tullié, and on his arrival at the camp, was sent with his division to Saint Omer. As he had there ample leisure for literary pursuits, and was exposed to few temptations, he commenced the study of the English language, in which he was assisted by the family with whom he lodged. So earnestly was he bent upon acquiring an acquaintance with our literature at that time, that he resisted even the usual calls of amusement; and describes himself as reading intently through half the night in a coffee-room, where his military companions were accustomed to assemble to play billiards, or talk over professional subjects.

In 1805 he returned with his division to Italy, and commenced, under the auspices of General Count Cafarelli, the translation of the celebrated military treatise of Montecuculi. The work was published, with a variety of notes by the translator, in a style of great beauty; and the reputation which Foscolo gained by it among the chief military men of the country, added to that which he already enjoyed as a scholar, obtained him the privilege of living as, and where, he chose, and of employing his time in study, instead of attending to parades and reviews.

As he had at last discovered how unfavourable Milan was to the enjoyment of literary tranquillity, he chose the town of Brescia for his general residence, and either there, or in its delicious neighbourhood, spent the chief portion of his time. He is said to have received from the principal persons in the vicinity the most agreeable and flattering attentions. His residence was the general resort of the learned and the accomplished, and his words were listened to with all the respect which the haughtiest philosopher could desire. The pleasure he derived from the interchange of rural solitude and the social meetings of literary friends, gave a new impulse to his poetic feelings, and he produced,

or rather concluded, at this period, the most admired of his poems, the "Dei Sepolcri Carme." It is addressed to Ippolito Pindemonte, and derives its origin from the decree which had been passed prohibiting sepulture in churches, and which, to the imagination of the poet, might well seem to deprive the world of those incitements to virtue which spring from the frequent recollection of the illustrious dead.

There are passages of great beauty in this production, and the general grandeur of its tone inspires a feeling of deep solemnity. The author's love of antiquity appears in it with far better grace than in any of his lighter pieces; and as his language is that of meditation, not of passion, he is free from the faults of exaggeration which he was so frequently tempted to commit on other themes. Few images can be found in poetry more beautiful than that which he has given of the Muses keeping watch over solitary tombs.

Siedon custodi de' sepolcri, e quando
Il tempo con sue fredde ale vi spazza
Fin le rovine, le Nimphe fan lieti
Di lor canto i deserti, e l'armonia
Vince di mille secoli il silenzio.

They sit the guardians of the tomb,—and when
Time scatters with his chilly wings around
The crumbling monuments, the Muses glad
The desert with their hymnings, and the strain
Conquers the silence of a thousand years.

While still in his retreat at Brescia, he published a specimen of his proposed translation of the Iliad, an undertaking for which he was, in many respects, admirably qualified. He was profoundly versed in the language of the author; he had a feeling in favour of the poetic machinery of mythology, which, while it injured his original compositions, would afford him a powerful and imperceptible aid in the translation of Homer: the style he had acquired in his own language was often of that dignified character which best represents the stern grandeur of the Greek epic; and against the faults into which he was most likely to fall, he was preserved by his favourite axiom, that one of the first virtues of a translator is fidelity. He had, however, two powerful obstacles with which to contend. The first was, that he had not sufficient patience to pursue a long undertaking to the close, while his own mind could view it with pleasure, and while the public could hear of its progress, and expect its termination with unexhausted eagerness. The second

was, that a translation of Homer by Foscolo was less likely to please unclassical readers—and by such are translations usually read—than one by Monti; and Monti had already published a version of many books of the Iliad, which had satisfied all except the most erudite. Our author, it appears, was not unaware of the difficulty which the popularity of Monti's work would oppose to the successful introduction of his own; and, in a letter to that writer, dated Brescia, January 1st 1807, he thus dedicates the work to him, and expresses his opinion on the great merits of Monti's own. "When I read my version of the Iliad to you," he says, "you recited yours to me, confessing that you had translated it without the grammatical Greek, and I was thereby confirmed in the opinion of Socrates, that the intellect deeply inspired by the Muses is the best interpreter of Homer. But my idea of my own strength was not so modest as to discomfort me; and, as you gave me your manuscript, and allowed me to avail myself of it, you drew me into venturing upon an unequal contest, in order that I might have the means of returning this your proof of confidence and affection." He proceeds to say, that he had not decorated his version with the beauties he had found in his friend's, and that he had printed the first canto of his with the first canto

of his own, in order that Italy might fairly judge which was the better. He did not doubt, he says, but that the palm would be awarded to Monti, but that he should then not regret his labour, as he had commenced the undertaking more through love of Homer than desire of fame.

In the introductory observations prefixed to the specimen of the version, he speaks at length respecting what he deemed to be the true method of good translating. "The devoted lovers of the fine arts in Italy," he says, "desire a version corresponding to the fame of Homer. Cesarotti, the greatest genius of our time, and who was excellently qualified to translate him, chose to imitate him, from a suspicion, perhaps, that the father of poets would not appear sufficiently resplendent in his native beauties. But he shines in other languages, and I believe that the Italian can, better than any other, represent his excellence, without pains being taken to ornament him, and his defects, without the fear of doing him injustice. I have, therefore, undertaken to translate the Iliad. Imagery, style, and passion, are the elements of all poetry. The exactness of the Homeric images can only be attained by him who copies them from an intimate acquaintance with the theology, the arts, and the

customs of those heroic ages; nor do I write a verse without first imbuing myself, to the best of my power, with the opinions of the writers on Homer. If any one, therefore, should sometimes find me obscure, let him ascribe it in part to the darkness of very remote traditions."

He then enters into a somewhat logical defence of his method, and concludes his short but interesting preface with the observation that, were it not for the Ossian of Cesarotti, the Giorno of Parini, and Alfieri, and Monti, the magnificence of Italian poetry would have remained buried with the ashes of Torquato Tasso.

His reputation for learning had now been long established; but it was not till the year following the publication of his Homeric versions that he took his station professionally among the scholars of his country. In 1808 he was appointed by the Government to the Professorship of eloquence in Pavia, which had been formerly enjoyed by Monti, and was now vacant by the death of Ceretti. Foscolo's military career was thus concluded; and it would seem, from the saying of Prince Eugene, as reported by Signor Pecchio, that he was not much missed in the department to which he belonged. According to that gentleman,

the prince said laughingly one day, that the three poets he had in his army, namely, Gasparinetti, Ceroni, and Foscolo, gave him more to do than all the army besides.

The new situation in which our author found himself at Pavia, excited him to the full exertion of his talents; and the temptation he was under, in some degree, to compromise his principles, served only, by the natural law of such minds as his, to call into play the most powerful energies of his character. One of the members of the government, the Count Vacari, with whom he was on terms of close intimacy, is said to have used his utmost endeavours to persuade him to address a courteous epistle to the Emperor, the answer to which he intimated would be his advancement to the legion of honour. But Foscolo, to his praise be it spoken, refused to accede, and is reported to have replied that, as far as the honour was concerned, it was a much greater distinction to merit a decoration and yet not have one.

It does not appear how he acquitted himself as a teacher, but, at the end of a year, the professorship of eloquence was suppressed. He had, however, distinguished himself so much by his Prolusion on the Origin and Office of Literature, (Dell' Origine

e dell' Ufficio della Letteratura,) that it was suspected by his friends that the government suppressed the professorship from anger at his refusing to praise the emperor, and from the emperor's personal dislike to an orator of such conspicuous ability. It is difficult to believe that Buonaparte could have been subject to the weakness thus attributed to him; and the true explanation of the circumstance, it is probable, may be found in the dangerous freedom of Foscolo's sentiments, and in his wanting some of the qualities of mind or disposition necessary to an instructor of the young.

On his retiring from the academy, he left Pavia, and took up his residence in the Borgo di Vico, a delicious rural retreat on the border of the lake of Como. There he resumed his poetical meditations, and composed the fragments of a Hymn to the Graces, which he dedicated to Canova. Some exquisite passages appear in this composition, and it is worthy of the beautiful production of the sculptor which it is intended to illustrate. The mythological dreamings with which it abounds are all in their proper places, and are admirably blended with the bright images of natural beauty which Foscolo at all times contemplated with the eye of a true poet. It is said to have been written in imi-

tation of Monti's la Bellezza dell' Universo. But it will not gain by the comparison.

At this period he lived more than usually retired. The only family he visited was that of Count Giovio, a man of taste and literary acquirements, and who had written an historical account of Como and its neighbourhood. In conversing with this nobleman, in wandering at his leisure amid the scenes which no eye can behold without rapture, and in revising the greater part of his compositions, his time passed pleasantly away, and, to add to the agreeableness of his situation, the daughter of his friend the Count was as fond of his conversation as her father, and endeavoured, whenever he appeared relapsing into the gloom which sometimes oppressed him, to dissipate his melancholy by her cheerful conversation. Some of the sayings of this lady are reported by Signor Pecchio, and she appears from them to have fully understood the character of the poet. "My dear Ugo," she said to him one day, when he had been repeating with violent intonation a sonnet from Petrarch, "You are a sentimental thunder."

The Tragedy of Ajax was, after the Hymn to the Graces, the chief object of his attention while residing in the Borgo di Vico. In the course of its

composition, he read the several scenes to his literary friends, and, in due time, the day was fixed for its representation at the Theatre della Scala in Milan. Public expectation, it is said, was highly excited, but neither the subject nor the execution was calculated to interest a modern and popular audience. The name of the author, however, ensured attention to the piece till near its close, when, by one of those unfortunate accidents of language, which has ruined many a drama, and a still greater number of orations, the patience and gravity of the spectators were both destroyed at the same moment. Teucer had scarcely exclaimed "Oh, Salamini, oh!" when the whole house appeared moved by a feeling altogether different to that which the author desired; and the English reader will no doubt remember the similar fate which attended Thomson's Sophonisba, at the unfortunate line of "Oh, Sophonisba, oh!"

Foscolo's enemies were not a little delighted at the failure of his tragedy, but they were not contented with the discomfiture he had met with at the theatre. Every means was taken to lower his reputation; and as if witticisms of the most virulent kind were not sufficient for this purpose, they ridiculed him, as well as his tragedy. But a still

worse species of attack than either of these was in the mean time employed against him. It was asserted that a political object was intended to be served by the drama, and that Napoleon was figured under the character of Agamemnon. The author did not contradict this report, which, it is said, had no proper foundation; and Signor Pecchio accounts for his not doing so by the supposition, that he preferred encountering danger from the suspicion that he had some deep and important meaning in his plot, to being laughed at as an author of a play unsuccessful simply from its dulness.

Apprehensive, however, of the consequences of being suspected by the public authorities, and disgusted at the treatment he received from the critics, he hastened to Florence, where he had the consolation of being treated with all the consideration due to his merit, and soon recovered sufficient spirit to commence another tragedy, which he rapidly completed, and produced under the title of La Ricciarda. But his greatest admirers allow that he was as unsuccessful in this as in his former essays of the kind, and that he had not at all improved as a dramatist since the composition of Il Tieste. About the same time also he published his Hymn to the Graces, in the conclusion of which, he al-

ludes to his having chosen as his residence, while in the neighbourhood of Florence, Galileo's house at Camaldoli.

——————————— Con elle
Quì dov' io canto Galileo sedea
——————————— A spiar l'astro
Della loro regina, e il disviava
Col notturno rumor l'acqua remota
Che sotto ai pioppi della riva d'Arno
Furtiva e argentea gli volava al guardo.
Quì a lui l'alba, la luna, e il sol mostrava
Gareggianti di tinte, or le serene
Nubi sulle cerulee Alpi sedenti,
Ora il piano che spiega alle Tirrene
Nereidi, immensa di città e di selve
Scena ; e di templi e d'arator beati,
Or cento colli, onde Appenin Corona,
D'ulivi e d'antri, e di marmoree ville
L'elegante città, dove con Flora
Le Grazie han serti, e amabile idioma.

——————————— With them,
Here where I sing, did Galileo sit
——————————— to watch the star
Of their bright Queen, the while the distant stream
Of Arno gliding through its poplar groves,
Furtive and silvery, mocked his thoughtful gaze,
But with its soft nocturnal murmurs soothed
Him musing. Here too the dawn, the moon, the sun,
Displayed to him in ever varying tints

The tranquil clouds that rest on the blue Alps.
Then the wide plains, which to the Tyrrhene shores
Stretch forth, a scene immense, of cities, woods,
Temples, and pastoral vales; and then afar,
The hundred hills where the bold Apennine
Crowns with its olives, caves and marble towers,
The elegant city where the Graces share
With Flora garlands and delightful speech.

As he had only left Milan under the impulse of feelings excited by temporary circumstances, his mind no sooner recovered its usual firmness, than he returned to his former abode, where he continued quietly immersed in study, till the fall of Bonaparte again changed the fortunes of his country. For a brief period, it was the hope of Milan that the independence of Lombardy would be regarded as sacred; but it is well known how speedily this hope was dissipated by the decree of the Congress, which once more made over the territory to Austria. Foscolo, while the fate of himself and his fellow-citizens was still undecided, again assumed the military habit, and was appointed by the regency to the command of a squadron. It was he also who wrote the bold and energetic protest, in which the Milanese appealed to the justice of the Allied Powers against being deprived of their independence. But the part he took had not even the effect of convincing

those with whom he acted of his sincerity in the cause of liberty. On the establishment of the Austrian Government, his acquaintance was courted, it appears, by some of its members, and as he did not immediately repel their advances, he was accused of an inclination to compromise his party and his principles. He was requested by the agents of the state to give them the plan of a new literary journal, which they were desirous of establishing, and he considerably increased the suspicions of his former associates by acceding to their wish. In consequence, moreover, of his forming the plan of the journal, he was offered the editorship of it, with a stipend of six thousand francs. But his integrity was in reality unassailable; the principles of the publication, according to his plan, would have been liberal, and to put his honesty out of the power of temptation, he resolutely refused the proferred editorship. This, however, was not sufficient to clear up the doubts which had been hastily and illiberally formed respecting his conduct, and he was at last made sensible of the suspicion with which he was regarded. Signor Pecchio was at this period one of his most intimate associates, and he has given an interesting account of the impression which the discovery made on

Foscolo's feelings. "I met him," says he, "one afternoon, just out of the Porta Orientale, wandering in a melancholy and angry mood along the line of poplars that leads to Loreto. He continued to walk for a considerable time without speaking a word. At length he broke silence, and said to me, 'You generally speak the truth to both friends and enemies,—tell me frankly, now, what do people say of me in public.' 'If you continue your intercourse with the Austrians,' I replied, 'your enemies will say that you are one of their spies.' My words seemed to strike him like a thunder-bolt. He quickened his steps; his countenance clouded, and he spoke no more."

The day following the occurrence of this circumstance, Signor Pecchio heard to his astonishment that Foscolo had left his home without taking leave of his friends, and had set out, unprovided with either a passport or money, to travel to Switzerland. Many were the surmises which his sudden departure created. Some persons attributed it to his having been involved in the machinations of a party adverse to the Government, and the discovery of which rendered flight necessary to his safety; but, when his character is considered, little doubt can be entertained but that the circumstance above

related, was the immediate cause of his sudden disappearance. He was candid and honest, and like honest men in general he valued his character for honesty above every thing else. The observation of his friend convinced him at once that he no longer stood safe on the eminence where his previous conduct had justly placed him; and the result would naturally be a feeling of anger towards himself, indignation at the injustice which was done him by his associates, and a resolution to put himself immediately out of the reach of their aspersions.

The town of Zurich received the fugitive, and he found within its walls an agreeable relaxation from the anxieties and turmoil he had lately experienced at Milan. He seems, however, to have still felt very keenly the affront which had been passed upon his tragedy, and the principal occupation of his mind at this period was the composition of a Satire in Latin prose, entitled "Didymi Clerici Prophetæ Minimi, Hypercalypseos Liber Singularis." This curious production was intended to overwhelm the reviewers of his tragedy with confusion; and to twelve copies he appended a key, which contained the real names of the persons alluded to. One of these, I am told by the Canon

Riego, he gave to the elegant translator of the Orlando Furioso, to whom, under the name of Julio Ricardo Worthio, the work was dedicated. I am, however, farther informed by the Canon, that Foscolo borrowed the copy of Mr. Rose and never returned it.

He remained in Zurich two years, at the end of which time he began to find himself again in danger from the Austrian party. To return to his own country was out of the question, and to continue in Switzerland would be to encounter persecution. How he had contrived to exist for the period he remained there, is not easily explained. But if his pen, which is said to have been his only wealth, had served him thus long, it could do so no longer, as he was at present situated; and thus compelled to form some new plan of life, he turned his eyes towards England, where he soon determined upon taking up his future residence. He had at first some difficulty to encounter in obtaining a passport, the English envoy not attending to his application; but he had the gratification of receiving from Lord Sidmouth, to whom he next applied, a prompt and polite answer to his request.

He arrived in this country under favourable auspices. He was a poet, a scholar, and a liberal;

and in each of these characters, there were persons of wealth and influence ready to appreciate his merits. At Holland House he was introduced to all the principal literary men residing in town. Byron, Campbell, Moore, Rogers, and other eminent persons, among whom were the present Lord Chancellor, Sir James Mackintosh, the late Editor of the Edinburgh Review, Lord John Russell, and Mr. Hallam, were his frequent associates; and the attention he received from them, is one of the best proofs that could be given of the extent of his acquirements, and of the high character of his mind.

From the mention I have heard made of him by some of his most intimate friends, he appears not to have lost the slightest portion of his self-confidence by becoming an exile, nor to have felt in the most exalted and intellectual society which this country could afford less independent either as a patriot or man of letters, than when surrounded by his admirers at Milan or Brescia. He was at no time an example of patience in dispute, but when his own character or that of his country was concerned, he lost all consideration for either the rank, or the sex of his opponents. I am told that he was once dining at the table of a distinguished nobleman, when some person present, whose

principles were widely opposite to his own, ventured to make remarks which he conceived derogatory to the honour of Italy. He did not conceal his emotion, but replied with all the force of his stentorian eloquence; the spirit of refined society quickly yielded to the indignation of the patriot, and grasping the table-cloth with both his hands, he went on encreasing in energy as he proceeded, till at last, his adversary having made a remark which added more fuel to the flame, he jumped up, and still grasping the table-cloth, drew, to the infinite consternation of the guests, most of the dishes into their laps.

It may be as well, perhaps, to mention here, that he was not less ready to say what he felt when quietly chatting with his acquaintances, if he chanced not to be in a remarkably forbearing humour, than when provoked to do so on some great occasion. A friend of mine, for whom he in reality felt considerable esteem, happened to be sitting alone with him one day, conversing on a variety of topics, when the discourse took a turn which tempted my friend to dilate at length, and with great gravity, on some point in philosophy. Foscolo listened to him a long while, but at last, without saying a word, he rose, rang the bell for

the servant, and on her appearance quietly told her to request her mistress to come up stairs. The lady obeyed, and he desired in a supplicatory tone that she would sit down and talk with his friend, for that he had quite tired him with his absurdities.

Many instances of his intemperate passion have also been told me by Mr. Redding and other gentlemen who were in the habit of engaging with him at chess. He was remarkably fond of that game; but such was his rage whenever his adversary made a very successful move, that he would start from his seat, and, gnashing his teeth, pull up his hair in large quantities by the roots. It mattered little where he might be when his anger was thus roused. A gentleman, who was in the habit of playing with him in his own house, has told me, that he always took the precaution of running to the opposite side of the room before he proclaimed check-mate. On the other hand, it is generally known to his acquaintances, that being irritated in a similar manner one evening, when playing at the house of a nobleman, he started up, and, before the whole company, challenged his astonished opponent to a rencontre of a different kind.

During the early part of his residence in town, he had lodgings in Bond-street, and his whole

mode of living was in conformity with his general taste for elegance. He was caressed abroad, and he wished to appear with equally good effect at home. To his satisfaction he found a numerous circle of acquaintances delighted to listen to his reasonings, and his displays of learning; and he was to be seen in his apartment in Bond-street, as in his villa at Brescia, surrounded by persons listening with flattering attention to the recitation of his works.

But he could not live without money, and he soon discovered that his expenses could only be met by the most vigorous exertions. Fortunately for him, the excellent individuals whose friendship he now enjoyed were anxious to render him as much good as their influence could bestow. They therefore proposed that he should deliver a course of lectures on Italian Literature, which he was excellently qualified to do with effect; and the success of which was, in a manner, guaranteed by his present popularity in the fashionable world. The lectures were delivered, and the expectations of both himself and his friends were more than realized. A thousand pounds, or something above that sum, was the profit he reaped from this public display of his eloquence; but he had, unfortunately,

already drawn upon a friend for the greater part of the receipts, and the remainder soon vanished.

Prudence would have dictated to most men, in the situation of our author, the most careful economy as a defence against the casualties to which the literary life is exposed; but Foscolo could not reason on the future, or if he did, it was only to invest it with delusive colours. Instead, therefore, of considering that his first object ought to be to make himself independent of patronage, which he knew could only be done by the strictest mode of living, he allowed the sight of the occasional sums he gained by reviews, and other literary essays, to deceive him into the notion that he might now make an extravagant speculation, on the chance of retaining the same popularity, the same health and mental activity which had filled his purse for the present.

He had always been particular in his choice of a dwelling, and as the reader will remember, a temporary success at the Faro tables at Milan was sufficient to induce him to change his residence, and hire more fashionable apartments. At the period of which I am speaking, he occupied one of the Alpha cottages near the Regent's Canal, but he soon resolved upon establishing himself in a

house better suited to his taste, and as one was not to be found of this character already built, his next determination was to build one for himself. A piece of ground adjoining the cottage he occupied was accordingly purchased, and there he had soon the pleasure of seeing his various little plans executed with all the speed and skilfulness of English ingenuity. The house was built in the style of a Venetian villa, and was named by its possessor the Digamma Cottage, in commemoration of the credit he had obtained by his remarks in the Quarterly Review on that controverted point of classical criticism, the origin of the Digamma.

So far as the purchase of the ground, and the simple erection of the building were concerned, Foscolo might have anticipated his income in a much worse manner; but this was only the commencement of his plans: the cottage had to be furnished, and cabinet-makers and upholsterers were applied to, with little regard to what would be the extent of their bills. He seems to have conceived that his talents would always command as much money as he required, and that he had but to make himself happy, and delight his mind with the elegancies of life, to convert every thought he possessed into an ingot of gold.

The Digamma Cottage and its beautiful gardens when completed, did no discredit to the refined taste of the projector. Elegance, and that species of subdued luxury which quiets sensuality without concealing it, characterized all his arrangements. Unfortunately this indulgence of his taste led to more than one evil, and it soon became the opinion of many of those who were acquainted with his manner of living that he was as much a sensualist as a poet. The circumstance on which this idea more especially rested, was his having three sisters for his attendants, whose personal attractions were confessedly the chief cause of his engaging them as domestics. He took, it appears, little care to contradict the reports which hence arose; and it must be confessed that several of his acquaintances, as well as his casual visitors, have always represented the women as his mistresses, rather than his servants.

Common, however, as the opinion has been, that Foscolo's Digamma Cottage was the image of an Eastern Haram, it yet admits of being doubted whether the idea had not its sole origin in the encouragement which he himself gave, either from vanity or madness, to these suspicions. After having heard his conduct represented by several persons in

a manner which did not allow of my doubting that he was a gross sensualist, I have had the advantage of conversing with other individuals, who, perhaps, had better opportunities of judging correctly respecting his character. Their testimony directly contradicts that before mentioned, and they repel with warmth the accusation that Foscolo was a sensualist. He delighted, say they, in being surrounded with whatever is beautiful, and he sought the fairest attendants that could be found, simply from the pleasure he took in beholding what is lovely. If he sometimes spoke of them, or to them, in a tone which scarcely became him as a master, it was only in conformity with his usual mode of expressing himself when elated; and his particularity about their dress and appearance is accounted for in the same way. He would never suffer any servant to enter his presence without having paid due attention to her dress, and it was his most especial direction that no person of the kind should ever appear before him in black stockings. Again, say the same individuals to me, Foscolo had the habits of a sensualist in nothing but appearance. He was remarkable for moderation in his appetites; his diet was of the simplest and most sparing kind, and he scarcely ever drank more than two glasses,

or two glasses and a half of wine. Add to this, he always expressed himself with warmth against gross indulgences of every kind, and few will be inclined to believe, after reading the events of his life, that Foscolo could be guilty of flagrant hypocrisy.

But however doubtful it may be whether the accusation above alluded to be correct, no doubt exists of his imprudence in respect to all his pecuniary affairs. At the period of which we are speaking he was in tolerable employment; he wrote for the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, and the encouragement given to his excellent essays on Petrarch, served to increase simultaneously his means and his expectations. So extensive were his designs, that he found constant employment for some young men of ability to translate or improve his language, and it was with one of these, Mr. Graham, that he was guilty of the folly of fighting a duel on account of his favourite servant. But a casual observer might have supposed that he was rapidly advancing in fortune. The establishment he kept up was one which would have swallowed up a revenue far greater than that which he could ever hope to command, had all his designs been completed and crowned with success. His debts, conse-

quently, were always on the increase, and as a large part of his upholsterers' bills remained unpaid, he was soon involved in difficulties which rendered ruin inevitable. To accelerate the approaches of distress, his mind was at times too much oppressed with anxiety to allow of its free action, and thus the great wheel of the machine on which his whole subsistence depended, soon grew unfit for use.

The importunities of his creditors were at first borne with tolerable patience; the confidence he felt in the powers of his genius, and the unwillingness with which minds such as his yield to mere pecuniary distress, kept him from perceiving the whole extent of his difficulties. He was annoyed, but he was not as yet wise enough to acknowledge to himself that he had entered on a plan of life far different to that which his means authorized; and he went struggling on, till his promises and excuses no longer availed him with those who had demands on his purse. On the first extreme pressure of distress he had recourse to his friends, and the aid they afforded him delayed for a brief period the progress of his disasters. But he was now in reality in a far worse situation than before; he had commenced a practice which hurt his independence,

and which contributed still further to deceive him as to the nature of his difficulties. A small sum was not sufficient to render him any effectual aid, but, however small the sum borrowed, it is sufficient to make a man of delicate and independent mind feel uneasy. And no one can doubt that Foscolo felt this ; but he never thought of anticipating any difficulty, and generally, therefore, he had no other alternative but that of yielding to it, or asking help of some of his acquaintances. At length an execution was placed on his premises, and he then appears to have resigned himself to despair. A gentleman, whose name I am not at liberty to mention, received a message from him late one evening, intimating the circumstance, and fully expressive of the misery of the writer. The call was promptly attended to, but on the gentleman's arrival at the Cottage, he was informed that Foscolo had retired to his apartment. He hastened to the room, and gaining admission with some difficulty, he discovered on the table near which the poet was seated a little dagger, which Foscolo always carried in his bosom, but only displayed on great occasions. After a slight inquiry, therefore, into the cause of his present distress,

he settled the demand of the person who had placed the execution in the house, and Foscolo was once more at ease.

I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. S. C. Hall, who went to reside with him about this time as his Secretary, for the knowledge of many particulars which respect the state of his mind under these distressing circumstances. He now began, it seems, to experience the most terrible fits of despondency: "He would sometimes ask me to pass the evening with him," says the gentleman above named, "but in the midst of our conversation he would cease speaking, and sit for a couple of hours wrapped in the most gloomy silence." This, however, was not the only sign which he gave of the miserable state of his thoughts. Mr. Hall, who lived in the small house next the Digamma Cottage, and which Foscolo retained in his hands, was startled by seeing him enter his apartment one afternoon, with a worse than ordinary gloom upon his brow. "Mr. Hall," he began, "I am come to see you for the last time. In two hours I shall be no more. When I was still a youth, Mr. Hall, I was numbered among the great men of my country; I was even called the first of poets, when there was no hair upon my chin. Alfieri, Monti, and the rest, all either feared

or envied me; and I went on distinguishing myself, till even Bonaparte himself trembled before me. And now what am I? A poor, miserable exile! My countrymen abuse me because I do not help them; and here I am myself without friends, and without one shilling in my pocket! I must sacrifice either my honour or my life; and I will therefore die!" Having said this, he left Mr. Hall to his uncomfortable ruminations; but the next morning he made him another visit, and laughed and chatted as if he had no recollection whatever of the part he had acted the preceding afternoon.

On another occasion, however, he addressed him in a similar manner: "I will die!" said he, "for I am a stranger, and have no friends."—"But, surely, Sir," was the answer, "a stranger may have friends."—"Friends!" he exclaimed, "I have learnt that there is no meaning in the word. I assure you, I called on the editor of the ———, to learn if there had been any thing about me in the newspapers; for everybody seems leagued against me, and leaving nothing undone to plague me. I assure you I do not think I will live after next Saturday unless there be some change."

Some of his most eloquent letters were also written about this period. In one of these the

following passage occurs, which Mr. Hall has obligingly allowed me to transcribe from the copy in his possession:—"After many different experiments in economy," says the writer, "I find that I cannot live on less than 400*l.* a-year. If this sum seem extravagant for a man in my circumstances, it is but moderate for one obliged to unremitted study, and to almost solitary confinement. I can easily undergo all privation; but my dwelling, which is always my work-house, and often my prison, ought not to distress me with the appearance of misery; and I confess, in this respect, I cannot be acquitted of the imputation of extravagance."

Again, in speaking of the various specimens of art, and other objects of luxury with which he loved to be surrounded, he says, "They encompass me with an atmosphere of respectability, and they give me the illusion of not having fallen into the lowest circumstances. I must also declare that I will die like a gentleman, on a clean bed, surrounded by the Venuses, the Apollos, and the Graces, and the busts of great men,—nay, even among flowers, and, if possible, while music is breathing beside me. Far from courting their sympathy, I will never give mankind the gratification of ejaculating preposterous sighs, because I died in an hos-

pital, like Camoens and like Tasso. And since I must be buried in your country, I am happy in having got for the remainder of my life a cottage independent of neighbours, surrounded by flowery shrubs, open to the free air;—and when I can freely dispose of a hundred pounds, I will build a small dwelling for my corpse also, under a beautiful Oriental plane-tree, which I mean to plant next November, and cultivate *con amore* to the last year of my existence. So far, I am, indeed, an epicure. In all other things I am the most moderate of men: I might vie with Pythagoras for sobriety, and even with the great Scipio for continence."

I have been told, and I believe truly, that scenes similar to those above-mentioned occurred between the poet and many others of his friends. Whatever assistance, however, he obtained from them, the catastrophe which he thus vainly endeavoured to avert could not be long delayed. He was compelled to make an arrangement with his creditors; by this he resigned the Digamma Cottage, with its furniture and his other effects, into their hands, and he was thus again without a home.

This was, perhaps, the most painful trial which Foscolo had as yet had to endure. He had had the

weakness to wish to appear in the world as a man of fortune, and he had received his acquaintances in a style which could add no dignity to the scholar and the poet, but which was necessary to one who could for the moment believe that the polished gentleman is worthier of honour than the genuine child of nature and genius. The change, consequently, which he had now to make in his mode of living preyed heavily on Foscolo's spirits; and so averse was he to being seen by those who had visited him at the Digamma, that he resolved to bury himself as much as possible in obscurity. To effect this the more securely, and at the same time to save himself from the visits of creditors yet unsatisfied, he assumed the name of Emeret, and took a small lodging in Kentish-town, whence he soon after removed to Hampstead.

He was not, however, alone in his misfortunes. In saying this I have to mention a circumstance involved in some degree of difficulty, and respecting which Foscolo's most intimate friends express themselves in doubt. A short time before he left the Digamma Cottage, a young English woman arrived there, whom he presented to his acquaintances as his daughter. She was about seventeen or eighteen, and as Foscolo had then been only

three or four years in this country, the curious were naturally inquisitive respecting the circumstances of her birth. The answer he gave did not, it must be confessed, satisfy all his friends, and I know that the strongest doubts are still entertained by some as to the veracity of the story. The circumstance is altogether a strange one; but it is my duty as a biographer to mention all I have been able to gather respecting it. Those who enjoyed Foscolo's entire confidence were convinced that the explanation he gave was correct, and I give it as they received it from his lips. When he was either in the South of France, or at Calais, with the army, he became acquainted, it is stated, with an English person who conceived for him a hasty and ardent attachment. Their acquaintance was not long restrained within the bounds of a virtuous friendship, and the young person alluded to is said to have been the fruit of the amour. The greatest caution was used to conceal her birth, her mother having been soon after married, and she was entrusted to the care of a female relative in England. With this person she resided till the death of her aged protectress left her unprovided for, and her father then determined upon taking her home to his own house. This is

the account which the Canon Riego informs me he always received from Foscolo respecting the amiable individual who watched over him through the most painful portion of his life, and to whom he was indebted for the only glimpse of domestic comfort he had the chance of enjoying. I have received from her own lips the same account which the poet gave his friends, with the additional observation, that had she been at liberty to mention circumstances which Foscolo wished not to have explained, and which more especially, for the sake of one party still living, she did not think it right to mention, no doubt would remain upon the mind of any one respecting her being his daughter.

To the same individual I am indebted for a knowledge of the numerous changes of residence which Foscolo made in the course of the year 1825, a piece of information which serves strongly to show the irritable condition of his mind. Scarcely had he got settled at Hampstead, when he discovered that the lodgings were damp or inconvenient, and he gave them up, sacrificing a portion of rent, and removed to Hempden. There he remained quiet some few weeks, relieving himself from the fatigues of study by driving about the country in a pony-gig, which he contrived to keep, notwith-

standing his late embarrassments. But Hempden soon lost its attractions, and he became enchanted with the scenery about Totteridge, and thither he accordingly removed without delay. "I was greatly pained by these changes," says his daughter, "and I remonstrated with him upon the impropriety of sacrificing so much money as we lost upon every removal, more especially on considering the situation we were in."—"But these prudential notions were urged in vain," she remarks; "he would come in from his ramble, and hastily bidding me put on my hat and shawl, tell me he had found a place at last where he should be sure to be happy, and be able to write with more comfort than ever, and these supposed advantages of the new lodgings were always regarded as sufficient to outweigh the consideration, that the landlord with whom he was about to break his engagement would have to be satisfied."

After all these removals from one country lodging to another, he at last discovered that to reside out of town was incompatible with that attention to printers and publishers which was at present so necessary to his support. Bidding adieu to Totteridge, therefore, he took chambers in the Temple, where he remained a few weeks, and then removed

to the Adelphi. His stay there was of no longer continuance than it had been in his former lodgings, and his next remove was to a small house named the African Cottage, situated in a passage near Saint Pancras Church. There, however, he was exposed to annoyances which he had no patience left him to bear. The cats, which assembled in great numbers about the cottage, disturbed his sleep during the night, and the children during the day prevented him from writing by their cries, or besmeared his clothes by running against him when he walked out. Nuisances of this kind no philosophy he had studied could enable him to support, and he made his retreat into Henrietta-street, Brunswick-square.

While he was thus changing from place to place, he was by no means eating the bread of idleness. He had entered into an engagement with Mr. Pickering to edite an edition of Dante and Boccaccio, with copious prefaces and illustrations. The undertaking reflected the highest credit on the spirit and good taste of the intelligent publisher, who conceived the design of this extensive work; and it was equally adapted to call forth all the learning and ability of the distinguished editor. But, unfortunately, occasions of dispute arose be-

tween the author and the bookseller, which were equally injurious to the repose of the one and the profit of the other. Some modification was made in the original arrangements; and Foscolo pressed for time and discontented, was accustomed to say to his daughter, that he must finish the work, but that it would not be one from which he could hope to derive fame.

While greatly harassed by this circumstance, he resolved upon again removing into the country. In pursuance of this design, he hired a furnished cottage at Turnham Green; the rent of this house was a hundred a year, but its retired situation, with the pleasant character of the surrounding country, held out a promise to the now almost worn-out poet of that permanent tranquillity which he so much needed. A visible alteration had taken place in his health since his necessities had obliged him to endure the incessant fatigues he had lately undergone. Seldom a day passed of which he did not employ eight or nine hours in hard writing, or in the preparation of materials for the works he was about. This, to a man in vigorous health and good spirits, may not appear much, and there are no doubt many literary men in this metropolis who habitually undergo a fatigue equally great and

sometimes greater; but Foscolo had a ruined constitution; and what was far worse, his spirits were all gone, and his mind laboured continually under the pressure of melancholy and discontent, which gradually tinged his thoughts deeper and deeper with misanthropy, and closed against him all the natural sources of consolation. Even his literary ambition had forsaken him, or been subdued by his distress. "I write now," he would say, "only as a journeyman carpenter or shoemaker works, that is, from necessity, for my living."

He had not been long settled at Turnham Green, when his indisposition began to assume a definite and alarming shape. Dropsy, with all its distressing symptoms, was seen preying upon his frame, and he had to be supported with bolsters while pursuing his necessary occupations. The anxiety of his mind kept pace with the disorders of his body. When the two or three friends who yet continued to visit him, begged him to refrain from writing during the worst paroxysms of the disease, he would repel their arguments with a cold observation, that he had agreed to do so and so, and he should do it.

In the spring of 1827, his malady grew daily worse, and his friends, who had hitherto hoped that as he was yet in the prime of manhood he might

overcome the disorder, began to entertain serious apprehensions for his life. As the season advanced, the symptoms continued to increase in violence, and the situation of the unfortunate poet was altogether one which called for the deepest commiseration. He had, at the same time, to contend with bodily suffering, and to force his mind into a state of unnatural activity, while neither his patience nor his painful exertions availed to relieve him of those multiplied cares and vexations which arose from the insufficiency of his income. On the third of August he wrote a letter to the Canon Riego, in which he alludes in a touching manner to his sickness and pecuniary wants. The Canon has obligingly allowed me to transcribe this letter, which is in English, and the following is a literal copy of it.

" Thursday Afternoon.

" MY DEAR SIR AND DEAREST FRIEND,

" Although it is the greatest effort for me, still my gratitude gives me some strength to hold the pen to thank you for your letters to my child and myself, and for your presents. We have received this morning every thing by the carrier; biscuits, books, newspapers, and every thing else. But let me entreat you do not send any thing more:

I will not spare you when I want your errands and purchases in town. In the mean while you are troubled enough on my account with your constant anxiety about my wretched health.

" The dropsy grows fast, and yet the surgeon does not find it ripe enough for the operation. Dr. Holland came to see me, and is resolved that Dr. Lawrence, an eminent surgeon, should see me. I expect him every day.

" Your intended visit, therefore, to Dr. Holland on this score would be useless. Pray, and it is one of my warmest prayers, do not apply to no man nor woman living to acquaint them with my situation, and to apply for relief. I write this warm, earnest entreaty to you because I heard something from Floriana ; but your kindness in this respect would cruelly distress my heart, and add to my mental sufferings and bodily infirmities. Adieu ! We expect you on Sunday, if you can. Adieu, again, from my soul.

" Yours most faithfully,

" U. Foscolo."

Notwithstanding the wish expressed in the above letter, the two or three friends who saw the rapid breaking up of his constitution, conceived it their

duty to inform the distinguished persons who had formerly been accustomed to see him at their houses, of his distressing situation. They were not unattentive to the call, and Lord Holland, the Duke of Devonshire, and others, most kindly offered to supply him with whatever delicacies their establishments afforded. Mr. Hudson Gurney, to whom he had dedicated his Dante, and who well merited that literary compliment, liberally granted him pecuniary aid; and, though he seems to have required far more to render him easy in his situation than he could fairly claim at the hands of others, he was thus afforded the consolations, to most men inestimably precious, of respect and affection.

About the last day of September, when death was staring him in the face, Foscolo summoned what little strength he had remaining to write to the celebrated Capo D'Istrias, who happened to be then in London, and from whom it appears he had at former periods received some acts of kindness. The letter contained many earnest requests for an interview, which Foscolo desired, it is supposed, in order that he might unburthen his mind of the anxiety he felt respecting his former obligations to the President, and speak to him about some provision for his unprotected daughter. "The latter," I have

heard the Canon Riego say, "was the subject which preyed most heavily on his mind during the last days of his life. I never saw him shed tears except when he alluded to the desolate situation in which he feared his child would be left by his death."—"In other respects," remarks the Canon, "he looked forward to death with cold indifference, and when speaking of his past life, he uniformly expressed the most bitter regret that he had not remained at home, and devoted himself to comforting the declining years of his beloved mother, the thought of whom was always in his mind, instead of wasting himself in the troubled pursuit of politics, or of literature as a profession."

The letter he had written to Capo D'Istrias remained unanswered till the tenth of October. On the morning of that day the President went to Turnham Green, but, on his arriving at Foscolo's house, he learned that he was then too near his end to be disturbed. Deeply affected at this intelligence, he sent in his name to the Canon Riego, and one or two other gentlemen who were present, and was admitted. He approached the side of Foscolo's bed with a friendly and commiserating air; but the attention was met with a look of recognition which implied more of reproach than thankful-

ness; and the dying man turned himself in his bed, as if wishing to hold no farther communion with his visitor. Death rapidly approached after this, but without making any alteration in the tranquillity, or rather, perhaps, in the indifference with which he had always expressed himself ready to meet it. At length it came, and, according to the account of one who was with him at the time, he underwent the last pang with as much composure as he would have drunk a glass of wine, and left the world as if he were glad to bid it farewell.

Thus ended the career of one of the most distinguished men that modern Italy has produced. The personal character of Foscolo has been submitted to severe criticism, and, like that of most men of his disposition, it has met with little mercy. His natural candour was sufficient of itself to create him enemies in the world; but this candour, so noble in itself, wherever found, was, unfortunately, leavened with an asperity which too often gave to his honourable love of independence the appearance of pride and angry passion. He was thus always obnoxious to the weak and the ignorant, frequently to the calm and temperate, and occasionally to those who were in every way worthy of his respect, and who would have shown him every

kind of honour but for his impatient and overbearing disposition. While he thus created a host of opponents by the mere faults of his temper, he added largely to their number by the imprudence of his conduct. Men of genius ought not, perhaps, to be judged of in the same way as the mass of human beings, whose actions are under the influence of different motives. Some allowance, perhaps, ought to be made for the indiscretions, not for the vices, of those, whose prudence even is derived from considerations with which that of mankind in general has little to do; but if the world ought to be thus charitable towards men of genius, men of genius ought to exercise equal charity towards the world, and not to be angry if they who have only the common maxims of plain sense and prudence to guide their decisions, blame every departure from such guides with pertinacious severity. Thus the course which Foscolo followed could not fail of generating suspicions as to his integrity. Those who were best able to judge of him, who knew his real feelings and sentiments, acquit him of many charges; but the acquittal of a few high-minded and thinking men has seldom sufficient influence with less elevated minds to make them forego their suspicions. Looking at Foscolo with-

out any wish to praise him for virtues which he did not possess, much less to accuse him of faults which did not tarnish his character, he may be fairly described as an ardent lover of public truth, a determined but rational partisan of freedom; as constant and devoted in his patriotism; temperate in his habits, and full of boldness and magnanimity whenever called upon to defend the cause of the oppressed. But, on the other hand, pride, with the less dignified vice of vanity, tinctured many of his best actions; he was prodigal of his means when it was his duty to exercise a provident parsimony; the good effects of his temperance and other virtues were counteracted by a weak and unjust indulgence in improper and useless expenses, and they were not unfrequently, I fear, sacrificed entirely for the gratification of some dark and latent passion.

The splendour of his character was thus much tarnished; but after all, let us hope that it was only the brightness of the surface that suffered; truth, if it be loved, lives in the very centre of the heart; patriotism and independence are of the man's self; and the vanity and imprudence of Foscolo never led him either to contradict his principles or to betray his country.

As a poet and a scholar, Foscolo will always occupy an eminent station among the writers of this century. The Sepolcri, the Hymn to the Graces, and some of his minor pieces, are eminently beautiful; but the Letters of Ortis surpass all his other works both in eloquence of language and grandeur of sentiment. His tragedies abound in noble thoughts, but as dramas they are deficient in many of the characteristics necessary to the popularity of such compositions.

I have but to add, that this great, but equally unfortunate and eccentric man, lies buried in Chiswick churchyard. Mr. Hudson Gurney kindly directed a stone to be placed over his grave; but it has long been covered with the grass and weeds, which indicate forgetfulness.

THE END.

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